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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LI. JANUARY 20, 1919. No. 3.

Tricks That Are Vain

By Ben Ames Williams

Author of "Marker's Hobbies," Etc.

Do you like to be kept guessing? Most of us do when it comes to reading a yarn. Well, this story of Mr. Williams' fulfills that order. Do you like to wonder what is going to happen next? "Tricks That Are Vain" also meets that want. In brief, the novel is one of suspense and surprise. The characters will give you many shocks, perhaps, especially the "enterprising burglar" and the cool young lady who met him more than halfway.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

THE GAY MARAUDER.

THE young man was whistling although it was no night for such gayety. The mist and fog were blowing in across the islands from the wide reaches of the North Atlantic; the air was filled with little specks of water, so small they had not weight enough to attract the attention of gravity. They floated like thistledown, and when they came in contact with a suitable surface—such, for instance, as the young man's worsted cap—they clung in little beads like jewels. The night was thick with them; and there was just enough virtue in the full moon that was hidden somewhere overhead to illuminate them all, so that the air seemed gray, rather than black, and a man could see his hand before him, if he chose to look.

The whistling young man did not attempt to look at his hands. This may have been because they were both burdened. In his left hand he carried a pair of oars, which dangled crisscross, and dragged now and then upon the ground, or against the bushes beside the path he followed. In his right hand he bore a suit case, obviously heavy. He wore a worsted cap, a heavy Mackinaw coat, corduroy trousers, and rubber-soled shoes. And he was whistling. The tune which he whistled may have been a private matter. Certainly it could not be recognized.

This young man, so far as appearance went, might have been any cheerful young chap, out on some pleasant expedition of his own. There was a quite definite air of respectability and decency about him; and the swing of his feet as he walked, and the brisk set of his shoulders were eloquently cheerful and good-natured. You might have wondered, had you seen him in that early summer of 1918, why he was not in khaki; but that was the only possible complaint you could have conjured up against him.

The path along which the young man strode might have been anywhere in New England. Gray rocks shouldered the sod aside here and there; and between these rocks, in little hollows, the tough juniper spread and clung. The path ran, as a matter of fact, along a low, rocky point which formed one side of a neat little harbor. It led, in due time, to the water's edge.

The young man stopped, once or twice, to put down his burdens and rest; and when he stopped he could hear, from the blanketing fog and mist to the right of him, low

sounds of oars, of distant voices, of stirring engines and of sighing fires. He could see nothing whatever. "Just the same," he told himself. "If I'd never seen the place in daylight, I should know by the sounds that there were ships in there now. And destroyers. Nothing but the deck plates of a destroyer makes just that sound under a shod foot."

And he wondered, idly, what a shod foot was doing aboard that particular destroyer.

Then he picked up his oars, and his suit case, and his straggly and uncertain little tune, and went on—whistling.

His path brought him to the water's edge at a point where a cribwork of logs, weighted with great bowlders, ran out beyond low-water mark. There was a footway, guarded by a handrail, out to the float at the end of this cribwork. He took the footway, and on the float discovered the light skiff which he had left there the afternoon before. Its weight was not great. He turned it right side up, rested its weight on the heavy skag which ran from bow to stern, and slid it off into the water, holding to the painter when the skiff shot free. Then he hauled it in along the float, knelt down and fumbled for the rowlocks where they dangled from the gunwale, thrust them into their sockets. He laid the oars in the boat, put his heavy suit case in the stern, stepped in himself, sat down and took the oars.

The mists swallowed him. He was, in fifty seconds, quite invisible to any chance watcher there may have been on the float or ashore. The mists cloaked him; they shut him in; they shut the world out. When he rested on his oars after a little, and looked about him, he could see nothing whatever except the fog, and the tiny ripples on the quiet water. He grinned cheerfully at this. "A gay night for a dark deed, my son," he told himself. And laid to his oars again.

After a score or two of strokes, he stopped once more and let the skiff drift. "Here or hereabouts," he told himself, and listened intently.

There came to him, almost at once, the little slap-slap of stirring water against an anchored craft. He nodded with satisfaction. "There lies my sweet *Sabrina,*" he told himself, and backed the skiff gently toward the sound, his eyes probing into the mist.

The dark bulk of a motor boat, riding at a floating mooring, presently revealed itself against the white curtain of the fog. He thrust vigorously toward it, caught a gunwale, lifted his suit case into the motor boat, stowed his oars under the thwarts of the skiff, took the painter in his hand and stepped easily into the larger craft. He made the skiff's painter fast to the tiller post of the motor boat, for lack of a cleat; he stowed the suit case under a ragged tarpaulin which he dragged off of the engine; and he crawled into the tiny cubby-hole under the bow and turned on the gasoline.

The young man's sweet *Sabrina* was a thick-waisted, snub-nosed, wallowing craft, designed strictly for pleasure riding. The pleasure riding for which she was designed was of the easy-going sort. She was capable of six knots, though she was rated nine. She had as many crochets as a maiden lady of fifty; and the exhaust pipe that led from engine to muffler smoked so strenuously that the *Sabrina* in action was always surrounded by a blue and nauseous haze.

The young man seemed to appreciate the character of his sweet *Sabrina;* for before attempting to start the engine, he sat back on his heels and stroked the top of the single cylinder, and spoke soothingly. "Are you minded for a little spin, this night, *Sabbie?*" he inquired solicitously. "Will you go for a ride with me? Is your cough bad, this evening? Does the damp air disturb you? And how, oh, how is your disposition, *Sabrina,* my lady?"

Sabrina rocked in the swell of some craft that passed her in the fog, and said nothing whatever. The slapping little waves beneath her bow chuckled.

"Silence gives consent, *Sabrina,*" said the young man gayly. "I'll just give ye a wee nippie, and we'll be off!"

There was a pet cock in the side of the cylinder, with a mouth like a small funnel, looking upward. The young man opened this pet cock, and from an oil can filled with gasoline, he spurted a few drops into the funnel. Then, gingerly, he turned the flywheel over, and the gasoline sucked down into the cylinder with a strangling sigh.

He brought the flywheel up to center. "Now," he said, and swung it over.

The engine barked. He snapped the pet cock shut. The engine stammered reassuringly; and he turned and jumped forward and threw off the mooring, and swung the wheel so that *Sabrina* headed, through the

mists, for the mouth of the harbor. The young man listened, a thought anxiously, to the hiccuping exhaust. "Your tune lacks rhythm, *Sabbie!*" he told her reprovingly. "Will you go, or will you stop?"

Sabrina said: "Put-put puta-a-put."

The young man smiled. " 'If she will, she will. You may depend on't; and if she won't, she won't, and there's an end on't,' " he quoted amiably. "Do your durnedest, *Sabbie*. I've business afoot, this night."

Sabrina did as well as could be expected. He sighted the light at the harbor mouth, and left it well to one side till he felt the lift of the outside swells. Then he swung the motor boat about and headed north along the shore. One of *Sabrina's* virtues was her shallow draft. He was able, even on that obscured and foggy night, to keep within sight of the bulking shore and so hold true his course.

He continued to whistle. Once, a close listener might have identified the burden of his song as that air from the "Pirates of Penzance," which deals with the burglar when he's not a-burgling. However, this familiar touch was presently lost in a maze of unrecognizable and mutilated melodies. It was evident that the young man was full of music; it was evident also that he could not get it out of him. He whistled with the best will in the world, but the results, to an attuned ear, would have been harrowing.

There is, on the New England coast, a certain bay which deeply indents the rocky shores. Along its western border rise steep hills that attain, now and then, to the dignity of mountains. The bay itself is wide, and island-dotted; and here and there among these islands one may catch, in the late afternoon, the glint of the setting sun upon wide, western windows. Given a cold winter, and one may walk from mainland to th' e isles, dry shod. By the same token, the summertime here is idyllic; never too warm, usually not quite warm enough. Blankets are welcome of a night. Warm garments are not amiss upon the average day.

It was up the western shore of this bay that the young man and *Sabrina* laid their course. They ran for a considerable time with the shore in plain sight through the night upon their left hand; until at last the young man heard the clanking toll of a bell buoy ahead of him; and he swung out, and located it in the fog. From it he laid a compass course, steadying the instrument upon his knee and illuminating it with an electric flash no larger than a fountain pen. The proximity of the anchor and of the engine made the compass eccentric; and he told it so. "You're as uncertain as *Sabrina,*" he remarked reprovingly. Nevertheless, it served. He laid his course, and held it, and *Sabrina* put-put-putted on.

Until, in due time, there rose ahead of him another shore. When he first saw this other shore, he ceased whistling and gave it his attention. The fog, he thought, was somewhat lifting. He could discern the round back of a hill that rose from the very border of the water; and atop this hill a squarer bulk that could be nothing but a product of man's hands. When the young man saw this, he patted *Sabrina* right on her water jacket.

"You're a good girl," he applauded. "We've arrived."

He studied his surroundings, calculated the strength of the tide current that was flowing into the bay, swerved to the southward, and at last flicked off the switch and stopped *Sabrina's* "putting." Then he watched.

Sabrina glided ahead under her own impulse for a space; then the tide caught her, and swung her around, and she began to drift up the shore as fast as a man might comfortably walk. The young man stopped whistling, and studied the shore that passed before his eyes, half blanketed by night and fog. There were evidently landmarks for which he had an eye. He named them as they swept past him. "There's the white rock——" "The big pine——" "And there's the ledge——"

The ledge which the young man marked was a solid sheet of rock which ran down at a thirty-degree slant into the water. When he saw it, fifty yards ahead of him, he stood up and lowered the anchor gently over the side; and as *Sabrina* came opposite the ledge, he let the anchor run until it caught, and then gave coil after coil of line, and finally made the line fast about the cleat, forward, so that *Sabrina's* bow came up into the flow of the tide, and she swung there, hard and fast.

When the young man was satisfied of this, he began a strange series of activities.

First he hauled the skiff alongside, and dropped the suit case into it, climbed in

himself, and rowed ashore. He hauled the skiff up on the ledge so that the tide could not drag it free, then took out the suit case, and opened it.

From the suit case he lifted a loose mass of garments, and laid them on the ledge and weighted them with a rock. Then from the same receptacle he took two packets. One was small and evidently heavy. The other was more bulky, but not quite so heavy in proportion to its size.

He laid the smaller packet by the mass of garments. Then he took the larger, and climbed the ledge to the edge of the wood that came down near the water; and he hid this large parcel in a spot that was evidently familiar to him, beneath the roots of a tree. He laid a flat rock in such a fashion as to make this hiding place secure against any chance eye.

Then he went lightly down the ledge, pushed off the skiff, threw the empty suit case into it, picked up three or four rocks, and rowed out to the anchored motor boat.

He moored the skiff astern. Then he put the rocks into the suit case, held it over the side with the top a little open until it filled with water, snapped it shut and allowed it to sink. It went out of sight without a sound.

He was still in the skiff when he did this. He climbed from the skiff over the stern of the motor boat; and then he proceeded to undress. He worked quickly, folding his garments as he removed them, and stowing them beneath a seat of the motor boat. And he found time to grin and apologize to *Sabrina* for the liberty he was taking with her modest sensibilities. When he stood, stark and white in the night, upon the motor boat's high bow, he said cheerfully:

"Please look the other way, *Sabrina,* my dear. I'm sorry for this; but it's the only way——"

He dove, slipping into the water as lightly as an otter. His dark head moved upon the surface for a space, as he fought the tide and worked toward the shore. Then his white body gleamed as he climbed out on the ledge.

The east wind was chill upon him; the water had been cold. He drew a deep breath, and swung his arms and flexed his body till the blood began to race. Then from that pile which he had taken from the suit case, he chose a towel, and whipped himself with it until he was glowing. After which he knotted a rock in the corner of the towel, swung it around his head, and flung it out into deep water where it disappeared.

Then he chose from the pile of garments something like a bathing suit, save that it had the turtle neck and the long arms of a football jersey. He twisted dexterously into this; he fumbled, found socks, drew them on. Then loose trousers, belted at the waist, easily kicked off if the need arose; then tennis shoes, a coat, a cap.

There remained nothing upon the rock except the heavy little packet he had laid there. He knelt and opened this with slow care. The packet was wrapped in cloth, black cloth. This cloth, the young man put in the left-hand side pocket of his coat. Within the packet were a steel bar, with a clawed end, eighteen inches long; a screw driver; a pair of pliers; an automatic pistol; an electric flash of the kind which may be set upright, like a candle; and a compact coil of light, stout rope with a wire core, not unlike a length of telephone wire.

The young man stowed these things away. The jimmy in a special pocket on the right side of his trousers; the screw driver and pliers on his hip; the pistol in his right-hand coat pocket; the coil of rope around and around his waist; and the electric flash hung from his belt in front.

Thus accoutered, he felt in the inside pocket of his coat and made sure a folded bit of paper lay there. He patted it comfortably.

"All set," he told himself. "Have at them, my son."

And he turned, with no further word, and climbed the ledge till he came to the border of the wood. He stopped there to wave his hand at *Sabrina,* tugging at her anchor rope.

Then he plunged into the darkness of the wooded slope and began to ascend.

CHAPTER II.

A SIGN OF BAD LUCK.

The young man found it hard work to climb that steep hillside, through the wood, in the dark. He stumbled, he collided, he slipped and he slid. Also there was one annoyance very close to him; to wit, his woolen bathing suit. He stopped, once or twice, and made a thorough job of scratching; and once he rubbed his back vigorously against a tree.

"I feel exactly like a horse," he chuckled,

in the darkness. "I want to lie down and roll."

Nevertheless, he pushed on. He dared not show a light, and, lacking a light, he lost his way again and again. The wood through which he climbed was not a self-respecting, first-growth grove of pine, with great trees standing in lofty, dignified companionship, and carpeting the ground about their feet with fallen needles. The hill had been cut over, a score or so of years ago; and it was grown up indiscriminately in birch, and alders, and straggly hardwood, and scrub pines, and stinking cat spruce. The fog, driving in from the sea, had laden every twig with a teaspoonful of water; and when the young man brushed against these twigs, they unloaded upon him.

His light tennis shoes began to squish and suck and slop before he had gone three rods; his trousers were wet to the knees in a hundred yards, to the hips in another hundred. His arms, from fending off the swinging branches, soaked through and through.

"If I were to sit down suddenly," he told himself, "I'd splash."

He came to an open, straggly clearing grown with blackberry bushes, and fought through them. There was no path here to guide his feet; he knew only that he must climb. His goal lay atop the hill; so long as he worked ever upward, he could not go wrong. So, in spite of difficulties, he pressed on.

It must have taken him a full half hour to climb the quarter of a mile or so from the water to the hedge that bordered the wide lawn of the villa on top of the hill. He called it a villa in his thoughts; it might have been called a camp, a cottage, a house, a mansion, or even a palace. That was all in the point of view. Half stone, half shingle, it sprawled across the hilltop. There may have been a dozen or fifteen rooms, four or five baths, a sun parlor, a conservatory—not to mention the wide verandas. That treasured paper in the inside pocket of the young man's coat bore a small scale but perfect plan of its three floors on the one side, a map of the surrounding grounds on the other. Before venturing through the hedge, the young man knelt in the shelter of a dilapidated stone wall, and by the light of a guarded match, studied this map of the grounds. Garden to his left, stables and garage behind, conservatory beyond, driveway to his right. Before him, the lawn, the croquet ground, the summerhouse, the tennis court, and the house.

He extinguished the match, folded the paper, returned it to his pocket, stepped forward and worked his way painfully through the low, thick hedge. Once through, he stooped and remained quiet for a space, looking all about him, studying the black bulk of the house where not a lighted window showed. After a little he became conscious of a faint, discordant sound, and wondered what it was. He discovered, in the end, that it was himself. He was whistling again; and he grinned and bade himself be still.

Then he went quickly forward across the lawn, reached the shadow of a great elm, circled the tree, and saw the croquet ground ahead.

He knew it was the croquet ground by the seats arranged at either side; and he calculated the position of the wickets and started to thread his way among them. But his calculations were amiss; he tripped over two before he was safely past the obstacle.

The white lacework of the summerhouse, with its honeysuckle cloak cloying the air with fragrance, rose before him. He listened cautiously to be sure the structure was occupied by no philandering maid or menservants, and when he was sure there was no one in the thing, he circled it, and crossed the clay tennis court. The court was completely surrounded by high, wire back stops; but there was a gate at either side, and the young man went that way.

The further gate brought him out at the foot of steps that led up on the side veranda. He stopped there and tried to press some of the water out of his clothes, then went up the steps. At the top he waited for a time, working his toes in his wet shoes, and listening to see if he were dripping anywhere. A drip of water from his garments might well betray him.

But there was none.

Satisfied of this, the young man moved with no further hesitation. From his left-hand coat pocket he took the black cloth, and he snapped it to fastenings in the inside of his cap, so that it fell snugly about his head. The folds overlapped in the back. His face, his ears, his very hair were concealed. Only his eyes shone dimly through the slanting orifices cut in the stiff front of the mask.

This adjusted, he took from that long

pocket in his trousers the jimmy; and with it he approached one of the large windows which opened on the veranda. He inserted the clawlike end beneath the window sash and pressed. The window yielded an eighth of an inch, then held. He nodded, murmured: "Fastened!" And he pressed harder.

There came a little splintering sound, as of screws torn forcibly through wood. Then a snap. Then dead and absolute silence as the young man waited, scarce breathing, to see whether these slight sounds had been heard.

He waited for minutes on end. Nothing happened. He slid the window open and prepared to enter.

Now this moment which was before the young man is the most tense and breathless in the lives of such felons as he. A burglar approaching the house he seeks to enter can, at the least alarm, flee like the wind to right or left or back. A burglar, once safely within a house, can take flight by the path he has prepared for himself; and his ears may be expected to give warning of any coming attack.

But at the moment when he climbs through the forced window, the marauder is helpless. He does not know what perils the dark room into which he steps may hold.

No man can be heroic in the act of climbing through another man's window. The only thing to do is make the best of it.

This young man made the best of it. He scrambled through as swiftly as might be, silence a secondary consideration. And, once through, he dropped lightly on his stomach and wriggled away from the dangerous spot into a corner of the room. The fact that he bumped his head upon the leg of a grand piano in the process was rather reassuring than otherwise. A piano is an excellent entrenchment.

Under, and behind the piano, the young man waited minutes more; and this time he was sure that nowhere in the big house about him was there a foot stirring. He crawled out at last, infinitely reassured. He stood up, put the jimmy back in his pocket, unhooked the electric flash lamp from his belt, took his pistol in his hand, and began to advance.

He knew his way now. Out into the hall, across to the library. There was a desk there. He rifled it swiftly. A few bills and some coins in one drawer; a gold watch, evidently out of repair and not yet dispatched to the watchsmith's, in another. He took the money and the watch with him when he moved back into the dining room.

Silver service in the drawers of the sideboard. Bulky, but solid. He found the flannel cases, wrapped the silver without allowing a single fork to clink on fork, or spoon on spoon. Back into the hall. Rolled the packed silver into a compact bundle, tied it with a bit of cord, left a loop to serve as handle, placed the packet in his line of flight to that open window.

Then, kneeling in a corner of the living room, the young man flashed his torch for a moment, and scanned the plan of the second floor of the house. Study, chamber, mistress' room, master's room. Ah! Up the stairs, back, third door on the right——

He forgot to return the map to his pocket. He left it lying on the floor. Out into the hall he went, and up the stairs with infinite care, resting his weight only on the inner ends of the treads, to avoid a betraying squeak. He reached the top of the stairs, the upper hall dimly illumined by a one-candle power night light, burning above his head. To his right, back, past one door, and another—— Here was the third. This should be the master's room, his goal.

He set his hand, ever so lightly, on the knob. He began the tedious business of opening that door.

He was half afraid it might be locked, or bolted. But—no! When he had turned the latch, so slowly that not even his agonizing ears could catch the faintest click from it, he pressed, gently, gently, and the door swung slowly open. A quarter inch, a half—an inch.

The young man applied his eye to the crack. Was there a night light burning here, too? No, the room was dark, obscure.

The door swung back another inch—another.

He did not swing it wide. When there was room for his slender body, he slid through. He saw, then, that two windows were open; and the east wind was pressing through these windows, flinging the curtains softly about. That wind would slam the door if he left it open. He wished to do so, but dared not. He closed it, as slowly, as gently as he had thrust it open.

When it was closed and latched he set his back against it and tried to accustom his eyes to the darkness in the room.

The wind, now that the door was closed, was blowing more gently through the open windows. The curtains stirred; they no longer flapped. So much gained. He marked the curtains. Double, they were. Some dark, flowered cretonne, over lighter stuff.

"The gentleman does himself daintily," the young man thought, and smiled, and continued his scrutiny of the dark room.

That was the bed—that formless bulk between the windows. Even in the dark he could see that it was gracefully fashioned; and he got an impression of soft, tumbled coverings. Beside the bed, a little table, with objects heaped upon it. Objects he could not in the dark identify. He listened for the breathing of a sleeper, caught it at last. Gentle, soft, untroubled.

"I should have supposed the old chap would snore," the young man thought. "Goes to show, you never can tell——"

Near one of the windows, dimly visible in the light that filtered through, was a chaise longue.

"Never saw one before, off the stage," the marauder told himself. "Funny thing for a man's room——"

Between the windows was a low dressing table, a mirror above it giving him back the blackness of the room when he stared at it.

"Ought to be a chiffonier, or something, somewhere," he thought. "Let's see——"

He discovered it—a high, mahogany bureau, at his left, along the wall; and he took a step toward it, then stopped.

He was uneasy. There was no denying it, no trying to hide the fact from himself. He was uneasy. This room was not as he had expected to find it.

What had he expected? Perhaps a certain Spartan simplicity. Perhaps a masculine harshness. Perhaps a litter of garments, dropped carelessly on chairs, here and there. Instead, a pleasant, gentle room; a room that bespoke delicacy. A room, he thought with a smile, that was almost feminine. And the man who must occupy this room was not feminine in any single attribute.

"He's a smoker," the young man reminded himself. "Ought to smell tobacco here, seems to me."

He sniffed the cool, moisture-laden air. There was no tobacco smell in it. There was an odor, a fragrance. He thought, at first, it was the fragrance of the honeysuckle on the summerhouse. But it was not so cloyingly sweet as that. It was like the fragrance of a solitary flower, found deep in untrodden woods. Like the fragrance of a flower. A very clean flower, he thought, smilingly. For this fragrance was, first of all, the fragrance of cleanliness.

He was uneasy; but he would not be afraid. "Let's see what we'll see," he told himself; and he moved, like a shadow, across the space that separated him from that high, mahogany bureau.

He reached it, and bent above it, peering with wide eyes to study the things that lay upon it. They were not such things as he had expected. If he had been asked what he expected, he would have suggested ebony-backed military brushes; a stout comb; perhaps a necktie, carelessly dropped there.

These things were silver-backed. He lifted one. He saw that it was a round mirror, a mirror such as women use.

As he lifted it, something startled him, some warning shocked his taut nerves. He whirled, reached for his pistol, dropped the mirror.

It struck a corner of the chiffonier with a splintering little crash. At the same time, above the young man's head, behind him, all about the room, lights sprang into being. He was blinded.

Blinded; but not so blind that he could not see a pretty young woman with heavy brown braids about her shoulders, sitting up in the bed across the room.

She was sitting up, and she had a black, automatic pistol leveled at the young man's midriff. He stared—and did not reach for his own pistol.

"You broke my mirror," said the young woman pleasantly.

He tried to say something; he was usually gay and quick of tongue. But just now his vocal chords were paralyzed.

"I've always heard," added the composed young woman, "that to break a mirror is a sign of bad luck."

CHAPTER III.

YOUR HAT OFF TO A LADY.

The young man looked at the young woman; he looked at her pistol; he looked down at the broken mirror on the floor; and he looked at the young woman again. He began to find his tongue.

"Bad luck?" he said uncertainly. "I'm—not so sure."

She seemed puzzled. Her brows faintly clouded. "Why?"

"If I hadn't broken it—I might not——" He bowed very low. He was a daring young man, but he did not quite dare finish the sentence. Nevertheless, she understood; and she smiled at him.

"Very good, under the circumstances," she said. "What are you doing here?"

"I dropped in for afternoon tea."

"I suppose you're a burglar."

"I thought so," he admitted. "I—have some doubts now."

"You must be a very clumsy one. Clever burglars don't drop noisy things—do they?"

"When they do so," said the young man, "they lose their reputation for cleverness."

She nodded. "What did you expect to find in my room?"

He shook his head. "This was a mistake."

"Oh!" she said, softly. "You were after father——"

"There should be certain valuable goods and chattels in his——"

She shook her head. "You were badly informed," she told him. "He leaves all the really precious ones in the city."

He shrugged his shoulders. "This is my unlucky night, after all."

She considered him thoughtfully. "In which pocket is your pistol?" she asked.

"This." He tapped his side.

"Take hold of the bottom of your coat on that side," she suggested. "See if you can shake it out—on the floor."

"The catch is off," he told her. "The fall might discharge it."

"On the whole," she agreed, "you had best take off your coat. Drop it on the floor in the corner, there. That's right." He was obeying her. "Now stand in the other corner." He did. "And take off that ugly, black thing."

"Now there," he said, "you ask too much of——"

"I would rather not shoot, from this distance," she said.

"I'd rather not have you—from any distance——"

"But isn't it customary to take your hat off—in a lady's room?"

"None of this is customary."

She tossed her head a little. "Come," she said. "Take off your hat, and your mask."

He hesitated; he obeyed. He dropped them on the floor at his side, and faced her—and dared to smile. But there was no smile in her eyes. She considered him, as a scientist considers a specimen. She was silent for so long that he asked at last:

"What are you going to do with me?"

She shook her head, as though to bid him be silent. "How old are you?" she asked.

"Twenty-nine."

"You seem—in good health."

"Never better, thanks."

"I should suppose you had some education."

"Yes."

"Then—isn't there something better you could find to do?"

He said amiably: "I'd be glad for suggestions."

"The army?" she offered.

He shook his head. "I've a dependent—I've—I have to take care of——"

She asked quickly: "Are you married?" He could have sworn there was anxiety in her voice. He smiled impudently.

"No. A dependent mother. Wholly dependent on me, ma'am."

She shook her head impatiently. "I'm ashamed of you."

He smiled like a Cheshire cat; and she said hotly: "Stop that silly grinning."

"You know," he suggested. "You ought not to sit up, that way. That east wind—you'll catch cold. Draw something over your shoulders."

"Be still. I don't know what to do with you," she told him.

"I'll just close the windows—if you won't be sensible."

"Don't move. I don't want to shoot you."

He looked interested. "Why not?"

"You're very—inconvenient," she told him. "Dad isn't very well. If I call him, or startle him—— His heart is bad. He never likes to be waked. And the men are all sleeping above the garage. And mother isn't here. And I——"

"I'm going to shut that window," he said, and took one step. She lifted the pistol; he heard the click of the safety catch. And he did not take the second step just then. He said: "If you shoot, it will wake your father—startle him—perhaps kill him."

She smiled. "I shall surely kill you; I might not kill him. I would have to risk that."

He lifted his shoulders. "Very well. Do I stand here much longer?"

She considered. "Please turn around," she suggested. "Stand against the wall—facing the wall. And—don't look around."

He obeyed her, heard a soft rustle of coverlets, a stirring of fine fabrics. Then one of the windows closed. He moved; she spoke sharply. "Stand still." He stood still, and heard the other window come down. Then her light footsteps. She came across the room, close behind him. Her pistol pressed the small of his back, and she touched his pockets, found the screw driver, the pliers, the jimmy. And marked, for the first time, the rope coiled about his waist.

"Why—aren't you considerate—to bring your own bonds," she said pleasantly. "Be still." And then: "Loosen an end of that rope, in front of you. Let it fall."

There was no lack of steadiness in her voice, or in that pressure against the small of his back. He obeyed her, felt the tug as she caught the light rope's end.

"Now," she said, "as I pull, please unwind yourself from this rope, if you don't mind. Turn 'round and 'round. But stay where you are."

"Like the heathen Hindu, taking off his sash," the young man cheerfully remarked, and gravely revolved upon his heel. His revolutions brought him, now and then, face to face with her as she receded across the room, drawing the rope. He saw she had slipped into a dressing gown. Her cheeks were very pink, her eyes very bright.

The end of the rope dropped from him. "Now—face the wall again," she said pleasantly. "And your hands behind you, if you please."

He obeyed amiably; but she did not at once bind his wrists. There was a silence; then: "No. You'd get tired, standing. Sit down in the chair—the big one, there."

He looked around. There were three or four chairs in the room. He would not have called any of them big. He frowned in mock perplexity.

She stamped her foot. "Don't be impudent! That one!" She pointed—not, he noticed admiringly, with the hand that held the pistol. That level muzzle steadfastly covered him.

He sat down in the chair, put his hands—at her request—down at his sides, and felt them expertly looped to the two back legs of the chair. Then another loop around his breast and the back of the chair, another about his neck; and then down, under the chair, to ensnare his ankles. In the end she stood back and surveyed him. "I think it will hold you," she said thoughtfully.

"It's very good rope," he agreed. "There's a fine wire in the center, so it's stronger than it looks."

"Is it—too tight anywhere?" she asked. "I don't want to make you uncomfortable."

"Not at all," he assured her. "I was never more happily situated."

"Be still." He was. "If you are impudent," she warned him, "I shall gag you, and leave you alone here till morning." She frowned thoughtfully. "I ought to, anyway."

"Leave me to the tortures of remorse? Please——"

"Are you really sorry you're a burglar?" she asked.

"It's the great sorrow of my life."

She seemed about to say something; then she stamped her foot again. "You're making fun of me," she protested.

He was on the point of some laughing rejoinder when she did a disturbing thing. She began to cry. He groaned, pitied her, observed that she was one of the favored few who can be lovely and in tears at the same time.

"Please," he begged. "Please——"

"I'm so scared," she confessed pitifully.

"Good Lord," said the young man. "G-Good Lord!"

And he watched her for a time, and suddenly asked as her tears were being dabbed with a fragment of linen: "How old are you, anyway?"

"Eighteen," she told him. She looked interested.

"Great Scott!"

"Why?"

"I—took it for granted you were ever so much older. You were so darned mature of fact. As though you'd known burglars always."

"I'm considered very mature for my age," she said demurely.

"You look sixteen, or fourteen—now that I know," he declared.

"Men are always very wise after they know," she assured him.

"How well you know us!" he murmured cheerfully; and added: "Honestly, I'm ashamed of myself—scaring a kid like you."

"I hate to be called a kid."

"A young woman like you."

"Are you really ashamed?" she asked.

"Horribly."

She nibbled prettily at the end of one slender finger. "You know," she said, "if you would promise not to do it again—and promise to go right out and enlist—to-morrow—I might let you go."

"You don't mean it."

"I might. It would be better than startling father——"

"You're a marvel."

"Would you really consider promising?" she asked solicitously.

"Would you take my word if I did promise?" he countered.

"Certainly."

"Why?"

"Because I can see by your eyes," she told him, "that you're really a perfectly trustworthy man."

"You can see by my eyes?"

"I'm a very good judge of men," she assured him. "So——"

"If I'll promise?"

"Please?" she begged.

"I'm almost minded to promise—promise you."

But he never did; because some one in the open door said gravely: "Who is this strange young gentleman, Elsa?"

The young man twisted his head and saw in the doorway an amiable, middle-aged countenance above a flaring yellow and black dressing gown.

The young woman cried: "Oh, father—don't be frightened."

And threw her fluffy dressing gown upon the broad, yellow and black chest, and her round young arms about the amiable man's large neck.

CHAPTER IV.

THE AMIABLE MAN.

Paul Bartrain could well enough afford to be an amiable man. He had money, health, and a wife and daughter to love and be beloved by. A pleasant New York home, the walls heavy with books; a taste for the music, the art, the cultured companionship which were within his reach; this cool retreat in northern waters. Also, hobbies, which he rode assiduously. He had been, in his day, a mighty hunter before the Lord. He had shot lions in Africa, speared seals in the Arctic, trailed the tiger in India, and the bighorn in the Rockies. A killer, and at the same time a lover of the beasts. He knew more about the habits of the ant, perhaps, than any man in this continent. And his butterflies were world famous; a dabbler in many sciences, he had perfected a method of immortalizing the coloring of butterflies, rendering durable their delicate wings, preserving even the gay dust which coated them. There were men who would have paid fabulously for one or another of these fragile treasures. Paul Bartrain would never have sold the least of them at any price. A cultured man, an interesting man, and—as has been said—an amiable man.

He loosed from round his neck Elsa Bartrain's solicitous arms, and in so doing discovered the pistol in her hand, and took it gently from her, and wagged his head at her and at the weapon.

"So, Elsa," he protested. "You have taken away my little pistol again. You will some day by yourself be shot."

She laughed a little. "There was a green apple on the old tree by the tennis court," she said. "I cut its stem with one shot, split the apple with a second as it fell."

"I heard those shots. This afternoon."

She nodded. "And it's lucky I had the pistol to-night, father. He was looking for your room. He might have wakened you."

Paul Bartrain smiled. "So you catch him—and waken me yourself, with shutting windows."

"Did it frighten you?" she begged. "Your heart——"

The amiable man smiled toward the captive in the chair. "My physician has given orders that I am never to be startled, or suddenly awakened," he explained. "My wife and my Elsa, here, take this matter with much seriousness."

"I should say it was serious," Elsa cried; and the young man said pleasantly:

"Hope you don't blame me for the disturbance, sir. I should have been out and away without waking any one—if it hadn't been for the mirror, there."

Bartrain smiled. "You have not yet introduced the young gentleman, Elsa," he reminded her. The girl turned to her captive. He answered her unspoken question.

"Carl Seibert is my name," he said.

Bartrain bowed. "But—you are American, not German?"

The captive looked faintly uneasy.

"Yes," he said. "Of course. What do you suppose? With this war——"

Elsa looked at the bound man accusingly. "Is that why you didn't enlist? Was your mother—just an excuse?"

Carl lifted his shoulders so much as the bonds permitted. "I'm loyal, all right," he declared. "But you can't expect a man to want to fight against his relatives. I've three uncles in Germany, if they're not dead in this war already."

Paul Bartrain sat down in one of his daughter's slight chairs, and drew the folds of his gaudy dressing gown over his knees. "Come, Elsa," he said pleasantly. "What is all this? This young man——"

"He's a burglar, father."

"I have assumed that. You heard him in the house?"

"I heard him in my room. And turned on the lights. And there he was."

The amiable man regarded Carl Seibert, not amiably. "What did you seek in Elsa's room?" he asked.

"I thought it was yours. It was marked: 'Master's room' on my map."

"What did you wish to get from my room?"

Seibert's lips shut.

"A little butterfly, perhaps?"

The captive held silent. The amiable man frowned; then saw the bound man's coat upon the floor, and got up, and crossed, and leisurely inspected it. He looked at the pistol with interest, opened it.

"But it is not loaded," he remarked.

Seibert smiled. "I never load it."

"Why not?"

"Afraid it might shoot me! Tricky thing."

Bartrain continued his investigations; and so came presently to the inner pocket where the map had been hidden, and found in it another bit of paper. He drew this out, read it slowly, half aloud.

"'Azure—upon the wings. Blue, and gold, and some——'" He looked toward Carl and nodded. "So that was it," he remarked. "My little butterfly that I bring all the way from Brazil."

Seibert said nothing at all. But in the amiable man's eyes there hardened a glint like steel, and Elsa saw, and cried: "Please, father. Don't be hard on him. He's really not——"

Bartrain's big head swung slowly, so that he could look at his daughter. Then he turned back to the bound young man, and for a space he remained silent. At last:

"Who sent you here?" he asked.

Seibert grinned amiably.

Bartrain nodded. "It does no harm to be loyal," he agreed. "However, if you will tell me who has sent you, I will let you go!"

Seibert said nothing.

"Was it Ratcheson?"

Not even a flicker in the bound man's eyes.

"Beauchamp?"

No sign.

"Morfee?"

Seibert remained immovable. Bartrain sighed. "Well, then," he surrendered. "Be silent if you please. How did you come into the house?"

"You'll find the window, downstairs."

"Who gave you this map of which you speak?"

No word.

"Where is it?"

"Downstairs. I forgot it."

"You do not seem to have the finesse of a master of your craft. Are you new at this pursuit."

Elsa cried: "Please, I know he is. Don't be hard on him, father!"

Something flickered in Bartrain's eyes. But his voice was still amiable as he asked: "How came you to the island?"

Carl grinned. "There you strike a proud spot," he said. "I came in sweet *Sabrina*."

Bartrain looked puzzled. Elsa opened her mouth and closed it again. Bartrain asked:

"Who, pray?"

"A motor boat," said Carl. "A motor boat that beats all records for general crankiness."

"Yours?" Bartrain asked.

"I bought it—for my purposes."

There was a certain thoughtful interest in Bartrain's eyes. "You ran it yourself?"

"I'm the only one that can. The man that sold it said the engine hadn't coughed for six months." Carl grinned. "I took him to mean that it was running smoothly; he meant it was not running at all."

"You made it to run?"

"Did I? Yes."

Elsa touched her father's arm eagerly. "Father——" She whispered so that Carl might not hear. "Please. We need a man —— Since Jim quit, last week——"

Bartrain studied the bound man. "My

friend," he asked, "are you a criminal from choice?"

Seibert grinned defiantly. Bartrain shook his head. "It is not possible," he protested. "I have made some study of mankind. Crime is repulsive. It is usually pressure of some sort—economic or otherwise—that starts a man on such a manner of life. Is it not so?"

Seibert's grin faded. "A man's got to live," he said hotly. "This damned war! A German name fires you from any job. I——"

Elsa said softly: "Our name is German, too. We've been made to suffer. We can sympathize with you. No matter how truly loyal we are."

Bartrain hushed his daughter gently. "Listen, my friend," he said. "I have no ill will toward you. Furthermore, I have need of a man who understands motor craft. My own man left a week ago. If you wish, you may have the place, on good behavior."

Seibert looked at him suspiciously. "What is this? A trick?"

Bartrain lifted his hands. "It is for you to say."

Elsa cried softly: "Please, Mr. Seibert. We mean to be friends to you."

Seibert grinned sulkily. "I suppose it's that or jail."

Elsa protested: "No. If you don't want to work for us you can go. You are free."

Bartrain shook his head. "My daughter is generous. But we are not justified in turning a—felon—loose upon the country. Unless you will stay where I can answer for your behavior——"

Seibert shrugged in his bonds. "All right," he said.

"You accept?"

"I've got to."

Elsa pleaded: "Please be glad. Smile, can't you?"

And he could and did. Bartrain rose ponderously; he loosed and unwound the rope that bound the man. "Then that is very good," he said. Carl was free; he rose. Bartrain took his arm. "Come." At the door, he turned: "Good night, Elsa," he said amiably.

The girl responded: "Good night, father. Good night—Mr. Seibert."

The door closed. Bartrain said quietly: "Come, it is near dawn. I wish to talk with you. There is no longer time for sleep."

Elsa Bartrain's maid was a pretty, dark-haired girl, who might have been French. Elsa called her "Helene;" but she spoke to her, as often as not, in German; and the maid answered in the same tongue.

Paul Bartrain sent for this girl after breakfast the next morning. She bobbed a curtsy, then stood respectfully. Bartrain eyed her.

"Good morning, Helene," he said.

"Good morning, Herr."

"You have seen the newcomer in our household?"

"Ah, yes."

"Helene," said Paul Bartrain. "I desire that you please this young man. Be amiable to him. Be kind. And if he questions you, Helene, answer discreetly—and report the questions to me."

"Yes, Herr."

"You understand?"

"Perfectly."

"That is all," said Paul Bartrain.

CHAPTER V.

THE FISHERMAN.

Carl Seibert fitted very easily into the life on Skeleton Island. Besides Bartrain's place, there were two others: the one, a small, remodeled farmhouse where dwelt Ransfield, the marine artist; the other, a huge affair as splendid as Bartrain's own, closed this summer because Morton, the New York banker who owned it, was too busy earning his dollar a year in Washington to frivol in the North. Ransfield dwelt alone in his place with a morose and sullen man, who cared for him, prepared his meals and tended him like a baby. The artist read, swam, fished, sailed and painted; and he avoided the companionship of other men. Even Bartrain, who was an amiable man and a good companion if ever man was, could make no impress on Ransfield's solitude.

There were other cottagers on other islands and on the mainland; and they came often to Bartrain's landing stage. Before the war, when young men were footloose, there were more of them, for Elsa was a very efficient magnet. Even now, there were many. Bartrain was an excellent host; his wife was a comfortable hostess. They were liked.

Seibert's first week was busy. Bartrain had three power craft. One was a tiny

affair which he used seldom, and which Seibert adopted as his own. Another was a forty-footer, open, with an engine that turned off an easy ten knots and might reach twelve. The third was a cabined motor cruiser, laid up this summer because gasoline was short.

"We're getting along on as little as we can," Elsa told Seibert. "There are others who need it more than we."

Bartrain and Elsa together showed Seibert these craft on the first morning. That is to say, Bartrain and Elsa took him down to the landing stage; but Bartrain was diverted there by a glint of color, a flicker of erratic wings in the meadow above the landing stage. He bade Elsa tell Seibert anything the new man wished to know, and himself was off after the butterfly.

So Carl and Elsa, in the light, natural-wood rowboat which served as tender, went out to the forty-footer, and Carl inspected it, inch by inch. Elsa was an enthusiast; she knew almost as much as he about the inward workings of the engine; and more than once she quite forgot that he was a lawbreaker, here on sufferance, when he explained and expounded for her benefit.

She was not in the least afraid of him. She had never had occasion to fear any man. Also, her pistol was in the side pocket of her loose linen skirt. Carl saw it bulking there.

He asked her permission to go and get *Sabrina* and bring that ancient craft around the island to this anchorage; and they took the small motor boat and set off. Elsa laughed at *Sabrina;* and Carl laughed with Elsa. *Sabrina* seemed to resent this ridicule; for she proved stubborn. When Carl primed her, she exploded loudly through the pet cock, but refused to start. When he did win from her a series of explosions, she reversed and backed until he pulled off the switch. Carl coaxed and teased, changed the spark plug, filed the connections, jiggled the coil, and was rewarded at last by a half-hearted effort. He ran *Sabrina* around the island, Elsa cutting circles about him in her own little craft.

Bartrain required him, that afternoon, to run the forty-footer up the bay half a dozen miles, and wait while the three—Bartrain, Mrs. Bartrain, and Elsa—dined and spent two or three hours at bridge with friends there. They ran home by the light of a newly risen full moon, and Elsa took the wheel, and allowed Carl to stand beside her, while Mr. and Mrs. Bartrain talked together in the comfortable seats aft. Elsa thought Carl very attractive; he talked well; he was gay.

They saw each other again the next morning. Carl had waked at dawn; and because the tide was high, and the day already promised to be sultry, he went down to the landing stage, and discarded the garments Bartrain had borrowed for him from Hawes, the butler, in favor of the swimming tights he had worn when he came ashore. He was two or three hundred yards out, resting in the slow swells that swept up the bay and passed outside the cove where the boats lay, when he saw Elsa come out of the little bathhouse on the point. He wondered whether she had seen him, decided that she had not, and watched as she stood on a rock at the end of the point, poised, and swept out and down in a swallow dive to cut the water with scarce a splash.

"She can swim," he told himself.

The current brought her toward him where he idled; and so presently she saw him, and for a moment was startled, and then smiled and called: "Good morning." He answered. She swam toward him.

They went in, fifteen minutes later, side by side; and Carl saw that the girl was trying to distance him, without wishing to seem to try. He smiled, slacked his own strokes. She called back a laughing taunt; and he slid into the crawl and crept up and past her without an effort, while she strove gaspingly behind him. They climbed out on the landing stage together.

"You swim splendidly," she panted. She was very pretty and slender in her snug suit.

The thought of her made him, somehow, depressed and sorrowful when he was alone, dressing. She was so gay, so frank, so simple.

"She must be square," he told himself. "She must be——" And a little later: "But old Bartrain!" And at last, when he came out and started up toward the house: "By the Lord, I hope old Bartrain turns out square, himself. It would be a shame!"

He did not explain what he meant by this, even to himself.

Ransfield, the artist, loved the sea, and all things of the sea were beautiful to him. Therefore he had, that spring, permitted the building of a weir off his shore. Bartrain

had protested at the time, amiably as he did all things; but when Ransfield proved obstinate, Bartrain dropped the matter.

The long, straggly, ugly line of the weir's shoreward end, with its withered branches intertwined, was inexpressibly ugly to Bartrain; but the artist liked it. He liked the uneven piles that inclosed the pound, liked the sagging lines of the net which hung on them. More than all, he reveled in the grotesque beauty of the three dories and the ancient two-master which harvested the fish. Harve Jones had built the weir, Harve Jones captained the schooner. A gaunt New Englander with leather cheeks and yellow teeth and a quaint twist of speech that pleased Ransfield. The artist had a score of sketches of old Harve in his portfolio before the summer was half gone.

There were two men in Harve's crew. Between them they drew the weir once each day, when the tide receded; and when there were fish to warrant, the two-master chugged away under her feeble auxiliary power and crossed to town and sold her herring to the canneries, her shad and alewives to any man that sought to buy. The men who served Harve were younger than he, stocky, steady; their tongues had the twang which fell from his; their eyes squinted as shrewdly as his; they were in all things younger replicas of Harve.

Harve called these men Seth and Tom. Seth, on a day when Carl had been for close to a fortnight under Bartrain's roof, rowed up the eastern shore of the island to Bartrain's cove on the northeast side and saw Carl tinkering with sweet *Sabrina*, and came clumsily alongside.

Still a boat's length away, he hailed: "Howdy?"

Carl looked up, smiled. "How do," he said.

"Hear'd how Bartrain had hired you," Seth suggested, still loudly.

"Yes," Carl admitted.

"That your boat, ain't it?"

Carl nodded.

"Ratty-lookin' thing, 'longside o' hisn."

"Think so?"

The dory banged *Sabrina's* sides. Seth caught *Sabrina's* gunwale.

"Le's dicker," he suggested amiably.

Their voices, now that they were within two yards of each other, fell. They were no longer audible from the shore. And the man whom Harve Jones called Seth asked, in a voice with only a trace of twang:

"Any progress?"

Carl shook his head.

"Found out anything?"

"Not a thing," said Carl.

"Anybody come to see him that we don't know about?"

"No one. I don't know whether he's in it, or not."

"Chief says he must be. Every one else has been watched—cleared up."

"If the chief says so," Carl admitted. "It's so. But you couldn't fine him ten dollars on my evidence."

"Think he's wise to you?"

"I don't know. I haven't asked a question anywhere, haven't made a break. I'm sitting tight—waiting—taking care not to see too much."

"Hawes was over in town last week, getting supplies."

Carl nodded. "I know it. I ran him over."

"He stuck right to business," said the man called Seth. "We watched him. He didn't pass a word to any one—except where he had to."

"I don't like him, but that's nothing against the man."

Seth tapped the gunwale of *Sabrina*. "Have they let you out of sight, yet? Ashore, I mean."

"Right along. The day I took Hawes in, Miss Elsa was with us. She went off—told me to report in three hours. I could have done anything."

"But you stayed in the boat. We were watching. The chief thought you might be followed if you landed. That would give them away."

Carl nodded. "I'm going in to-morrow. Bartrain wants to play golf. I'll go ashore."

Seth glanced toward the house. "Here comes the maid, Helene," he said.

Carl smiled. "She's a pretty thing. Miss Elsa told me I might take her for a ride any day I was not busy."

The other man's eyes narrowed. "Maybe they've set her on you. Watch your tongue!"

"I tell you, I'm walking on eggs. They can't get anything on me."

"I'll tell you," said Seth quickly. "We'll have to do something to put you in right. You know Shard?"

"Yes."

The girl was at the shoreward end of the landing. Carl looked that way. She waved her hand. Seth reached in his pocket. "I'll take her right now," he said, his voice raised and twanging. "Here's the money. Has she gas enough?"

"She'll run down the island," Carl told him. He took the greasy bills Seth counted from a dingy roll, and then climbed out of *Sabrina* into the tender. Seth secured his dory to the cleat astern, tried *Sabrina's* engine. It started. He loosed the mooring and swung her out and away. Carl rowed to the stage. Helene smiled dazzlingly.

"The man has taken your boat," she told him.

"Sold it to him," Carl explained. "Got more than I paid. He's stuck."

The girl laughed. "But—that beautiful boat. How could you let it go?"

Carl smiled. "Every man needs money," he said.

She lifted her shoulders carelessly. "Miss Elsa says you may take me for a ride in the little launch," she announced.

Carl looked up the hill toward the house. There was no one in sight. "I'll be glad to," he said. "But I must go up and ask permission."

The maid pouted. "I bring it."

He shook his head. "You might have misunderstood. Wait five minutes——"

"Such a virtuous young man!" she jeered good-naturedly; but he went on his way. When he came back, she applauded him. "Forgive me for laughing at you," she told him. "You were right."

"I'm free till six," he told her. "Where would you like to go?"

"You promise we shall not be shipwrecked?"

He laughed. "Come."

She stepped down into the tender as he steadied it; and he rowed out to the small motor boat, and helped her in. When he started the engine, she took the wheel.

"I shall steer us," she told him.

"Then if we run ashore, I'm not responsible."

She looked up at him over her shoulder. "On a desert island?" she laughed. "Would you mind that so very much—with me?"

Carl frowned at her sternly. "My dear young lady," he said, with mock severity. "Beware of frivolity."

She shook a pink finger under his nose. "Beware of me," she countered.

But they came back safe and sound, three hours later. Carl was calm, Helene was inclined to sulk. He put her ashore; she said a curt "Thank you," and was gone. Watching her go, he smiled.

He did not smile when, a little later, Seth and the *Sabrina* chugged in.

"She hiccups," Seth called out. "I want to ask how ye tinker this durned timer."

But when he was alongside, he said swiftly: "Three men came while you were gone."

"Who?"

"Hobart and Sereth, of New York, and Marsh."

"The pacifist?"

"Yes. So——"

Carl's eyes clouded. "It looks bad!"

"They got you out of the way."

"But it doesn't prove a thing!" Carl exclaimed.

"She'll work now, I cal'late," Seth ejaculated; and Carl looked up and saw Bartrain on the footway above them.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PACIFIST.

There are some men who are constitutionally wrong; who are constitutionally beset with a desire to be thought right. Senator Marsh was one of these.

There was a quirk in Marsh. He was beset by some imp of opposition that made him take sides against the world. He was always a minority leader; he was always unpopular; he was always hated, and ridiculed, and overthrown.

If the majority had ever, by any chance, come over to his way of thinking, Marsh would have switched his ground without a qualm. Battle was the breath in his nostrils; that is to say, the battle in which words are the only weapons. In the old days of lethargy, Marsh had been a big-navy man, a shouter for war. When the *Lusitania* was sunk, and the country stirred with sudden guests of anger, Marsh smiled and waved his hands. He would have barred his countrymen from the seven seas; he denounced the abominations of all war; he fought wordily for peace.

When war came, and he was silenced, the rancor in the man curdled. He ceased to be ridiculous; he became venomous. He was like a silent serpent, writhing and squirming to find a chance to strike.

They found a fit name for such gentry, fifty years ago. They called them Copperheads.

The other two, Hobart and Sereth, were inconsiderable men. There was nothing against them, save, perhaps, that they consorted with Marsh. Only, Hobart had gone into Africa once with Paul Bartrain after lions. The two were friends. It was not strange that Hobart, being in the locality, should seek out Bartrain. That he brought Marsh with him was bad; it was not damning.

The three men had not come unannounced. Bartrain had had a line from Hobart, two days before, casually mentioning the possibility of their appearing. Bartrain understood that this casual mention was in reality a very definite appointment. He made his arrangements accordingly. One of these arrangements was made with Helene.

"Take the new man, Seibert, away with you for the afternoon," he bade her. "I wish to risk nothing."

"I must ask Miss Elsa."

"She will be very glad," said Bartrain.

Later, he watched from the window of his room and saw the girl and Carl depart. When they were out of sight around the next island to the north, he came downstairs and out upon his broad veranda and turned his glasses southward, in the direction from which Hobart and Sereth and Marsh would come. And saw, presently, their lumbering, hired craft.

He was himself at the landing stage to receive them. There was friendliness in his greeting to Hobart; there was a faint, half-hidden condescension in his word to Marsh; there was distinct deference in his formal salutation to Sereth. This third man was small, silent, grave. His eyes were narrow and keen. He clipped his words when he spoke; and when he spoke, the others gave attentive ear.

Mrs. Bartrain and Elsa received the men on the veranda; and for a few minutes they talked together with pleasant inconsequence. Then Bartrain clapped Hobart's arm and said amiably. "Come—I've something new to show you, upstairs. Perhaps you others will be interested."

Mrs. Bartrain bade them come down in time for tea; they promised. Bartrain led them upstairs, to his own study. A large, pleasant, quiet room, heavy with books. A little fire crackling upon the hearth. He closed the door behind them.

Until the door closed, Bartrain had been the host, the dominant figure in the group. With the closing of the door, the man Sereth seemed to grow, impalpably, in stature. He was instantly the master; the others deferred to him. Bartrain himself drew forward a chair, saw Sereth comfortably seated.

His attitude toward Sereth was submissive, the attitude of a loyal servant. Toward Marsh, the pacifist, he was conciliatory, anxious to please. Some warning from Sereth's eyes made him tender Marsh a cigar before the others, made him hand Marsh the first glass when he prepared high balls. Marsh, somewhat subdued heretofore, expanded under this attention. His chest rose. He threw back his long hair with a gesture of his right hand.

They began to talk, casually, in quiet tones. Only Marsh, when he spoke, tended to wax oratorical. Their words were at first veiled, indefinite. Harmless generalities. When they became a little more explicit, Marsh at first turned pale. He looked about the room with the nervous anxiety of an animal that fears a trap. Sereth saw this, and reassured him.

"There is none to overhear, in this place," he said crisply. "Is it not so, Bartrain?"

"I answer personally for every person in the house," said Bartrain.

Sereth murmured: "I am reminded—you spoke of a new man."

"He is not here. I have sent him away to flirt with a pretty girl. She will not bring him home till you are gone."

"Do you trust him?"

"I begin to. I asked you to investigate his story. Locate the mother of whom he speaks. Inquire into his experiences."

Sereth nodded. "His mother is a good German. It is true that he has lost several places because he was a German."

"He has betrayed only normal curiosity, since he came here," said Bartrain. "Furthermore, I have a hold upon him. His signed confession to the burglary. That I required from him, the morning of his arrival. I can dispose of him at any time, very virtuously. A word to the police."

"He is of no use to us in jail," said Sereth coldly. "Do you trust him?"

"Almost."

Sereth nodded. "It is best to test the

man. I will attend to it. When do you next go to town?"

"To-morrow."

"Let him go with you. Leave him at liberty there."

Bartrain said crisply, as though for this moment he reverted to ancient habit: *"Zu befehl!"*

Sereth smiled, turned to Marsh.

"This young man will have a part in our plan," he explained. "It is necessary that we be sure of him."

For a moment, the four were silent. Then Hobart said doubtfully: "Is it certain that this is a wise stroke? Cannot something more tangible be done?"

Sereth looked at Bartrain, as though expecting the amiable man to answer. Bartrain said only: "I obey."

Sereth glanced toward Marsh. "Your opinion, sir?" he asked deferentially.

"Take the man," said Marsh. His tone thickened. "Take him. Destroy him. Anything. He is the backbone of this nation of fools. He is the pied piper; they follow him like rats. He can whistle a pig over a precipice. Take him, and you take the guiding light of them all!"

Sereth listened; he nodded his agreement. "You are right, my friend," he said. "We have tried other things. No need to enumerate these other strokes of ours. A factory disappears in a flash of flame and blood; another rises from its foundations. A ship sails, and never makes port. Another slides down the ways. A thousand men strike; another thousand pick up their tools. These matters hinder; they do not halt. You cannot stop a rolling stone by throwing pebbles at it." He glanced at Hobart with a smile. "You cannot stop a charging lion, my friend, by throwing branches in his path. There are but two things that will stop a lion's charge. One is a bullet. But this lion is too big for bullets. The other is a change in the lion's own mind, a faltering in his will to charge. This is a more simple thing. A little, little matter will often weaken a nation's will."

"He is the voice of the nation; he tells the people what they wish to do, and they acclaim him," Marsh ejaculated.

Sereth nodded. "That is true. A nation is a mob. Such a nation as ours across the sea, gentlemen—it requires a master. Such a nation as this in which we dwell requires a leader. This man, my friends, is the true leader of this nation's will to war. We take him. They howl; they lament; they curse. But in a little while, their will impalpably weakens. Perhaps, when we come to them with bids for peace next winter, they may be so weak as to yield. Then in ten years, or twenty, we may strike again, and complete our victory."

"This man is the key to the situation," Marsh agreed. "He is heavy in the balance. If it were not for him, we might never have gone into this cursed war of yours——"

"Might never have spilled the blood of your young men," Sereth agreed gently. "What a shame that one man could bring this blood spilling about! He was unfair to his land in that, sir."

"A traitor, a damned, demagogic traitor," Marsh agreed.

There was another little silence. Then Bartrain asked respectfully: "Is it assured that he will come?"

"Quite," said Sereth. "Have you not heard from him?"

"I wrote him," Bartrain explained. "I said I had been told he would come here, and asked him to give me a day or two. I have not yet heard."

Sereth smiled. "I had a wire this morning," he said. "He wrote you yesterday, accepting. You and he will arrange the day, later. He wishes to see your new butterflies. He has not seen you since your last return from Brazil, and is anxious to talk with you of that land. He is your very sincere friend."

Bartrain's eyes flickered; he said respectfully: "You are well served."

"There, yes," said Sereth. "May I be as well served here."

Bartrain bowed. "I do what a man can."

Sereth rose and took the other's hand as Bartrain, too, stood up. "After all," he said, "yours is the great sacrifice. You leave everything, here. But we shall repay you."

Bartrain's voice was steady. "I serve gladly," he said. "I ask no payment; I ask no recompense for what small things I may lose, so that my service prove worthy."

"You are a good German," said Sereth. He smiled, flicked the stub in his hand toward the fire. "And this is a good cigar, my friend. Another?"

The four were smoking, talking casually of unimportant things, when Hawes, the butler, came presently to say that tea was served by the tennis court.

A little later, Bartrain saw them off for town again. He walked back up the hill toward the house with head a little bowed; and the amiable man was frowning thoughtfully.

After dinner that evening, Bartrain went to his study. Elsa and her mother had gone with Carl, in the open motor boat, to a nearby island. They asked the amiable man to go; he protested that there were tasks awaiting him, and sent them off in Carl's care.

In his study, he sent for the maid, Helene. She came, closed the door behind her, waited for his word.

He said pleasantly: "Good evening, Helene."

She curtsied.

"You are good to look upon, my dear young lady."

Helene smiled.

"I was pleased with you this afternoon. You did well the thing which I asked you to do."

"It was simple, Herr."

"The young man?" Bartrain smiled. "Is he—susceptible, Helene?"

She lifted her shoulders expressively. "I cannot tell."

He chuckled. "Which means, no doubt, that he ignored the openings you left him; that he would not join you in a little flirtation."

"He is a very gay young man," she said. "He has a quick tongue. He has wit. He catches the ball when it is thrown to him, and tosses it back again. He can, when he chooses, offer a compliment."

There was something in her tone as she finished that was eloquent. Bartrain put her thought into words. "But he does not often choose? Eh?" he suggested. And when she smiled. "Also, there are some flatteries not to be put into words——"

She said, as coldly as one reports the result of a scientific experiment: "I allowed my shoulder to touch his. He moved slightly away. I stumbled into his arms; asked him to help me steer, and he did so, but coldly, Herr. He might have been a thousand miles away."

He studied her thoughtfully. "There is, even in that, something a little suspicious," he remarked. "You are far from unattractive, my dear. It may be only that his heart is otherwise engaged. It may be——" His voice hardened. "It may be something more damning. Did he question you?"

"But yes, Herr. But only as any man might. Matters of gossip, without consequence. Chit-chat."

"For example?"

"How long have I served Miss Elsa? Where is my home? Where else have I served? When? Whether I like the work? Such matters, and no others."

"Nothing as to me? As to my affairs?"

"No, Herr."

Bartrain smiled. "At least the young gentleman is interested in you, Helene. You must continue to encourage him."

"Yes, Herr."

"Study this man."

"Yes, Herr."

"And speak to me of what you learn."

"Yes, Herr."

"That is all ——"

Another questioned Helene as to that afternoon upon the water with Carl. This other was Elsa, when the maid was combing and brushing the girl's brown hair and braiding it for the night. Elsa, yawning prettily behind her hand, murmured:

"Did you have a good time with Carl, Helene?"

"The bay was very beautiful, miss."

"Yes, wasn't it. You must go out more often. Did he ask you to go again?"

"No, miss."

Elsa looked into the mirror and caught Helene's eyes. "You must have been ungracious, Helene," she chided. "You should learn to be kinder to handsome young men."

Helene lifted her chin a trifle. "Is was not I who was unkind," she said, and smiled.

"Did you like him, Helene?"

Helene shrugged. "He does very well, miss."

Elsa shook her finger at Helene in the mirror. "You tried to flirt with him, little coquette," she teased.

"One cannot flirt with a stick of wood," said Helene.

Elsa said: "Oh!" And nothing more. But Helene marked that her mistress' eyes became thoughtful, and happy; and after a little Elsa began to sing, under her breath.

When Helene left her, Elsa got into bed, snapped off the light, drew the coverlets about her, still singing. And after a little she ceased her happy little humming, and went smilingly to sleep.

It did not occur to her to wonder why she should be happy because Helene called Carl Seibert a stick of wood.

CHAPTER VII.

SHARD.

After lunch the next day, Bartrain sent for Carl. "We're going across to town this afternoon," he said. "For dinner and the evening. Is the motor boat ready?"

Carl touched his cap. "Yes, sir."

"We will start at three."

"Very well, sir."

Bartrain smiled amiably. "You may moor it in the harbor and have the evening to yourself," he suggested. "Be ready to bring us back at ten o'clock."

"Yes, sir."

The amiable man hesitated. "Are you satisfied here, my friend?" he asked.

Carl smiled. "Very much so, sir."

"I should be sorry to lose you."

"You're not likely to."

"I should be sorry, also, to be forced to be harsh with you."

Carl said gravely: "I know when I am well off."

Bartrain smiled. "Good. At three."

When he and Mrs. Bartrain and Elsa came down to the float at five minutes past that hour, Carl had the forty-footer alongside. The handsome craft was swept and garnished; there was no fleck of dust or trace of oil upon her. The engine in its pit, aft, shone with polishing; and Carl, in gray uniform, held the boat steady while the three stepped in, then thrust her free, stepped to the engine, started her, and took the wheel. They circled, passed out of the cove, rounded the northern end of the island and turned southwest toward their destination. The blue hills along the bay's western shore kept company with them as they held their course; they caught, now and then, a glimpse of some white farm or shingled cottage along the shore. At the southern end of their own island they saw Ransfield on a bowlder making one of his endless sketches of the weir there, and Bartrain looked, and smiled, and waved his hand across the water. Ransfield responded with a miserly gesture.

The endless life of the bay went on about them. A fish hawk plunged in the shoal waters by the weir, and flew heavily away with a cunner dangling in his talons. When he had climbed thirty feet above the water, he fluffed his wings and shook them to free the feathers of water, just as a dog shakes himself after a plunge. The action checked his flight; he fell a dozen feet, then caught himself and flapped off toward the huge and ugly mass of his nest in a dead birch halfway up the shore. The black-headed herring gulls circled like swallows here and there across the water, and dropped now and then to kiss the waves. The motor boat disturbed a porpoise, sunning himself upon the surface. He gasped and dove with sleekly rounded back. Elsa cried out with pleasure, and begged Carl to turn that way so that they might see him more closely when he rose again. Carl swung the boat around; but the porpoise broke water far astern, and Elsa was as disappointed as a child. Carl, watching her covertly, told himself again that she, at least, was loyal, and decent, and square.

"And the old man, too, I hope to Heaven!" he prayed.

They struck off then from the island toward the western shore, and Carl sighted presently the tossing bell buoy from which he had set his course through the mist, close to a month before. Thence southward along the shore again, till between two jutting piles of rock that broke above the receding tide the harbor opened, and they swept in and threaded their way across to a mooring, and left it behind while they ran alongside the landing to put Carl's passengers ashore.

Bartrain said to Carl again, as he stepped out of the motor boat: "You are free till ten o'clock, my friend."

Carl touched his cap. When they were gone, he ran out to the mooring and made the motor boat fast, then lowered the light tender from its nest on the stern, and got in, and rowed ashore. He needed some clothes; and he had his first salary check from Bartrain in his pocket. "You can cash it at the bank in town," Bartrain had told him. "I will speak to them."

He went directly from the landing to the bank. The cashier nodded when he presented the check. "Mr. Bartrain told us you would be in," he said, and gave Carl a sheaf of bills. Carl thanked him, sought the post office and bought a money order payable to Mrs. Hans Seibert. Across the street, at a stationer's store, he got paper and envelopes; and he went back to the post office and stood at the high desk there, and with the rusty pens provided he wrote a few lines, and inclosed the money order, and mailed it.

Then he sought a clothing store and made

his purchases; a couple of shirts, a necktie, undergarments. Shoes at a shoe store. With the two parcels he walked back to the landing and rowed out to the motor boat and stowed the things away. Then to the shore again.

No one had spoken to him; no one, so far as he could discover, was watching him. Yet he had expected some one. He was hungry. He found a restaurant, sat upon a stool at the high counter, ordered fried haddock, pie and coffee and began to eat.

A man sat down on the stool beside him, and Carl looked and saw that the man was Shard, of whom Seth had spoken. He gave no sign. Shard ordered food. They ate silently, their elbows rubbing. When Carl rose to go, Shard likewise rose. Carl paid at the cashier's desk; so did Shard. Carl went out to the street. Shard followed—touched his arm—held up a cigarette.

"Got a match?" he asked.

Carl produced one. Shard offered him a cigarette. Carl accepted it, and they lighted from the same match. Shard said casually:

"This is a dead town."

Carl smiled. "Think so?"

"Oh, of course, if you live here——"

"I don't."

Shard clapped his arm. "Neither do I. Let's look around together."

Carl said pleasantly: "All right. Might try a movie."

"Too hot. Let's go down to the water."

They walked along together, turned toward the harbor, found a drive along the shore, and sat down together on a bench there. People were passing. It was still half an hour before sunset. Behind them were thick shrubs, which the eye could not penetrate. They spoke casually, then Shard touched Carl's arm.

"I know you," he said.

Carl looked at him suspiciously. "What's that?"

"Saw you bring old Bartrain in. That's a swift boat he's got."

"Yes," said Carl cautiously. "It's a good boat."

"Worked for him long?" Shard asked.

Carl studied him. "Why?"

"Nothing. Just asking."

"About a month."

"Got a nice place out on the island, hasn't he?"

"Yes. Fine."

"Gay times there, I suppose."

Carl got up. "Look here——"

Shard touched his arm. "Sit down. Don't be touchy."

Carl laughed uneasily. "Oh—all right. He's been decent to me. Gave me a job when everybody else kicked me out."

Shard nodded. "Many people come out there to see him?" he asked.

"I suppose so."

"Who?"

"Friends of his."

Shard grinned. "What's he like? What does he do?"

"Tends to his own business," said Carl.

Shard chuckled. "There you go again. Does he trail around at night? You ever take him out in the motor boat?"

Carl turned to the other angrily. "That's his business, and mine," he said, and got up.

Shard cried: "Wait a minute."

Carl did not wait. He walked steadily away. Shard hurried after him. Carl turned, faced the man.

"Listen," he said curtly. "I don't want your company. Understand. Beat it."

"Don't be huffy," the other insisted. "I only——"

"If you keep this up, you're going to get hurt," said Carl. Shard threw up his hands.

"Oh, all right," he said sulkily.

Carl smiled. "Exactly. Good-by."

This time, Shard did not attempt to stop him. Carl went back up toward town, wandered aimlessly for a little, looked in windows. It was just after sunset, dusk was settling on the western waters beyond the harbor. The posters before a moving picture house beckoned him. He went in. The house was half empty. He took a seat toward the rear.

A minute later, a man sat down beside him. Carl looked sidewise at the man, but did not recognize him. The man grinned at him.

"Bum show," he whispered. "But you've got to do something to kill time."

Carl nodded. "Sure."

"S'pose you're waiting for Bartrain," the man suggested.

Carl edged a little away from him.

"Why?"

"Saw you come in with him." He tapped Carl's shoulder. "Listen," he whispered. "I want you to do something for me."

Carl looked at him.

"What?"

"You're a good American, aren't you?"

"Sure."

"Bartrain's a German."

"You're a liar!"

The man chuckled. "That's all right. Suppose I can prove it. Prove he's a spy. These subs, down the coast. One of them could sneak up the bay mighty easy. They know the waters here. Suppose I can prove he signals to them."

"You're a liar," said Carl evenly, again.

"You're a good American. If he's not what I say, no harm done. You work for him. I want you to keep your eyes open, tell me what you see out there on that island of his."

"No."

"If you won't do it for your country, I'll pay you. Whatever you say."

"If you'll come outside, I'll knock your head off."

"Be reasonable."

Carl got up.

"Will you come?"

"No. Listen to me. I know you. He caught you, breaking into his house. You do what I say, or I'll speak a word to the police."

"Go ahead," Carl invited. "Come now, and I'll tell them you're a liar!"

The man flicked open his coat. Even in the darkness, Carl saw a tiny golden flash.

"See that?"

"Yes."

"United States is back of me. Do what I say?"

"You're barking up the wrong tree," said Carl, and sat down again. "Bartrain is all right."

"I know better."

"You're wrong," Carl insisted. "He's nothing but a harmless old bug hunter. You're seeing things."

"Where does he go at nights?"

"To bed."

"Where did you take him one night last week?"

"Nowhere."

The man tapped Carl's arm. "Keep your eyes open out there. You'll see things, my son. And—I'll see you again."

Carl nodded indifferently. "I'll keep my eyes open, all right," he promised. "But you're wrong. And if you were right—what do I care? He was square with me."

"He's a spy."

"Tell him so." He got up again, this time went to the door and out. In the glare of the lights above the door, he looked at his watch. Half past nine. He went toward the water.

Forty minutes later, Bartrain and Mrs. Bartrain and Elsa found him holding the boat at the landing, waiting for them. They ran back to the island.

There Carl asked Bartrain to wait a minute. When the others had gone on a little way, he said respectfully:

"Two men tried to pump me, in town, sir. Seemed to think there was something wrong out here. One was a secret-service man. I thought you would want to know."

Bartrain wagged his head amiably. "We have to expect that, Carl. We folk with German names."

"Yes, sir," said Carl.

"Thank you for telling me," said Bartrain. "And you're welcome to tell these men anything you know. I have nothing that I would want hidden."

"That's all right," said Carl. "It's your business, sir. I'll tell them nothing. If they want to know, they can ask you."

Bartrain smiled. "You are wrong. Suppose I were what they think me. A spy?"

Carl moved one hand, as though to dismiss the suggestion. "I wouldn't care a hang," he said sulkily. "I don't owe this country anything."

"Tell them anything they ask," Bartrain said again. "Good night, my friend."

Carl said: "Good night." Bartrain moved away, joined his wife and daughter, went up the hill. Carl moored the boat, rowed ashore in the tender and followed them.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NIGHT ALARM.

The Bartrain place was an establishment of considerable proportions. Though the island was only a mile or two long, there was a touring car, which meant a garage behind the house. This garage was out of proportion to the single car it housed; it had space for the large carriage, and for Miss Elsa's gay little two-wheeled cart. She had a pony, which she liked to drive.

Above these carriage accommodations, on the second floor, there were four bedrooms and a bath. These bedrooms were occupied by Hawes, the butler; by two men who worked upon the garden and the lawns; and by Carl.

Helene and the women servants lived on the third floor of the house itself. There was a local telephone system connecting house and garage.

On the second night after that trip to town when Carl encountered Shard and the secret-service man, Carl was wakened about one o'clock in the morning by the buzzing of the telephone in his room. He answered, and heard the excited voice of a woman, the maid, Helene.

"Carl?" she asked in a whisper that was hoarse with something approaching terror. "Carl? Is that you?"

"Yes. Yes," he said. "What's wrong?"

"I just heard a motor boat stop down at the landing," she said. "Some one's coming ashore."

"Don't worry," he told her. "What of it? Perhaps they're expecting some one."

"They stopped the motor outside, and rowed in. I heard the oars," she said. "Go down, and see. Wake the other men."

He reassured her laughingly. "All right —don't worry. I'll go down."

While he pulled on trousers, shirt, shoes, he debated whether to wake the other men. Hawes was portly, middle-aged, not the sort upon whom to rely in case of trouble. The other two were ancients. He chuckled, "Besides, there's probably nothing. She imagined she heard some one."

He went quietly down the stairs and out, and listened for a moment. Nothing. He jogged past the house, saw no one, heard no sound. Helene's window was dark. He pictured her cowering there, and turned and trotted down toward the landing.

He encountered no one on the way; but at the landing he found a disreputable dory moored; and out a little ways he could dimly see the shape of a motor boat, ungainly, awkward. He hailed softly:

"Who's there?" No one answered; and his lips set tighter. "Let's see about this," he told himself.

First he made sure their own tender was locked in its nest at the end of the float. Then he turned the dory adrift.

"He can't get away now, at least," he told himself. "So——"

And he turned and ran up the hill, his feet soundless on the soft turf. Nothing on the way, nothing to be seen when he came near the house. He chuckled.

"Another burglar, maybe," he told himself, and crept up on the veranda, tried the door. It was locked. He inspected the windows to the right. All fast. He retraced his steps, tried those to the left of the door.

The second, he saw as he came near, was open. It yawned blackly. He hesitated an instant, then:

"If he's in there, he's gone upstairs—or back to the dining room. Let's see."

To the window, a single motion and he was through. And from the blackness, a shot lanced at him. He ducked, slid to one side, crawled across the floor. He had no weapon.

There was a chair in his path. He circled it. He touched the couch at one side of the room, then grinned. There were cushions on the couch. He threw one across the room, it thudded lightly. Two shots stabbed that way. In their flash he saw, dimly, the form of a man crouching in the doorway.

He leaped toward this man. The man heard. There were other shots. A fusillade of them. It seemed to Carl an eternity that he was in the air, springing toward this man. It seemed some one of those racing bullets must have struck him. He could scarce believe he was unhurt. He held his breath, groping out with his arms, dodging. The blazing pistol was like a beacon to guide him. He threw himself past it, felt an arm, closed. The pistol clattered on the floor.

Something hit him on the head. He gripped a thick chest, dug his head into a man's neck, tugged, felt a rain of blows on head and shoulders. With his left arm he held the antagonist close, with his right he struck up and over his own shoulder, and felt his fist thud against a face, there in the dark above him. He felt the bared teeth of the other man.

His breath was whistling; he could feel the other's chest strive for air. They swayed backward, struck the door, caromed into the piano with a clang of wires. Carl thought, chuckling, that this tumult must be a jolt to Bartrain's weak heart. Then he got a heel behind the other's feet and jerked and thrust, and the man went down. Carl on top of him, pummeling, striking like a piston.

He choked and struck for seconds on end before he realized that the other man no longer fought back,

"Knocked out," he guessed, and released his hold a little. The other did not stir. He rose on one knee. Then the lights came on above and all about him, and he turned and

saw in the doorway Elsa and Bartrain. He said, pantingly:

"Helene telephoned me—man on the island. Here he is, sir."

Bartrain saw the open window. "He had broken in?"

"I found him in here."

Elsa crossed quickly to him, her face white. "There were shots. Did he hit you?"

He smiled, shook his head. "No."

"You shot him?" Bartrain asked, anxiously.

"No, sir," said Carl. "Threw him. Must have hit his head on something. Knocked him out."

They had all but forgotten, for the instant, that the man might need succor. Elsa dropped on her knees beside him.

"His head's bleeding," she cried.

Carl looked down, then. He was not prepared for what he saw; yet, after the first instant of amazement, he was not surprised.

The man on the floor was the man who had accosted him in the moving-picture theater. The same man. His coat lay open, his arms were wide. There was upon his breast the little gold badge he had shown Carl in the theater. Elsa stared at it—whirled to her father.

"Father, he's a secret-service man!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE ACID TEST.

When Elsa, kneeling by the unconscious man upon the floor, cried out that he was a secret-service agent, Carl looked quickly at Bartrain, and Bartrain looked from the bleeding man to Carl. There was a moment's silence, broken only by the stertorous breathing of the man upon the floor. Elsa cried:

"He's strangling. We must do something for him ..." And she ran into the hall, calling to Helene. The maid appeared almost at once, from the upper hall where she and the other women servants had been huddling, listening. Elsa bade her bring water, iodine, gauze.

Bartrain bent above the man and looked at his gold badge. And he shook his head ruefully.

"That is true," he said.

"What is he doing here?" Elsa cried. "Why should he come here, father?"

Carl ejaculated hotly: "They nose in everywhere. The dogs! This is one of the men that talked to me in town, sir. Tried to bribe me."

Elsa protested: "Please! He was just doing his duty. But I don't think it was very—courteous of him to break in through a window."

The man began to groan faintly with returning consciousness. Carl blew on his knuckles.

"I wish I'd killed him," he said sullenly.

Elsa cried: "Shame!"

And Carl fell silent.

Then Helene came with the things Elsa had demanded, and the girl bent over the man and began to bathe his head. There was an ugly cut at the back hidden in blood-matted hair. She dabbed at this with gauze, dipped in water; and called over her shoulder to Helene:

"Nail scissors, please."

When Helene brought them, she clipped the man's hair away from about the cut as deftly as a surgeon. Bartrain and Carl stood at one side, watching. Bartrain smiled at Carl, and explained: "She has had some training as a nurse, you understand, my friend."

"I should think so, sir."

The hurt man was stirring. Elsa bade Helene hold his head still, and herself murmured as she worked: "There, there. Lie quietly."

When she had bared the cut, she bathed it, then caught the edges together with bits of plaster. Over the plaster, a folded pad of gauze. Over this, around and around his head, the bandage, cunningly bound so that it might not slip up or down.

"There!" she said at last, sitting back on her heels. "How does it feel?"

The man's eyes were open now; he looked at her, looked slowly around. Then he stirred, made to rise. Helene helped him to his feet. He stared from one to another; his wits seemed to be woolgathering. Bartrain said gently:

"Don't try to talk, my friend. You were hurt. You will be more comfortable, presently."

The man caught Bartrain's eye, and nodded thoughtfully. Then he looked at Carl. Carl's hurriedly donned clothes were torn and rumpled; there was a widening black bruise upon his cheek bone; there was a scratch upon his forehead. The man saw these things, and he grinned.

"I remember, now," he said slowly. "You tackled me."

"I warned you, in town the other day," Carl told him. "I told you I'd knock your head off."

The man put his hands gingerly to his bandaged poll. "It seems to be still here."

"I'll finish the job—now—or any other time," Carl exclaimed; and he took a step toward the man. Bartrain touched his arm.

"Come," said the amiable man. "That is enough." He looked toward Elsa. "You had best go to your room. Helene, begone. Carl, remain with me, and with this gentleman. This is a matter to be quietly considered."

Bartrain closed the door behind her; then he turned back to the two men.

"I do not know your name, my friend," he said to the bandaged man.

"No matter." The man grinned.

"But I know who you are," Bartrain continued amiably. "As you lay upon the floor, your coat fell open. So that the insignia which you wear hidden there was revealed."

The man touched his side lightly, his eyes shot from one of them to the other. Carl ejaculated:

"You sneaking spy!"

Bartrain held up his hand. "Carl," he said coldly. "You will be silent." To the other: "I respect the authority you represent," he said quietly. "I do not know what you came here to discover. If you will tell me what you wish, I will give it to you. If you will tell me what you want to know, I will answer your questions."

The man said quietly: "I did not intend to be discovered. My errand is my own concern. It has failed. That is all. If you have no objection, I will go."

Carl stepped toward him. "See here," he said. "You'll do nothing of the kind. If you want to do what Mr. Bartrain says—ask him questions. Anything like that. Go to it. But if not, then you'll explain why you are here. What right had you to come? Have you a warrant to admit you to this house? Because, if you haven't, you're a plain cracksman, and I'm going to see that you tell the judge all about it."

Bartrain interrupted: "No matter, Carl. This man is doing his duty. You and I may call this an outrage, but that is aside from the point. If he has nothing to ask, he can go."

Carl protested. "You're making a mistake, sir. The country's spy mad. All right, let the country look out. If they call us spies, hold them responsible, demand their proof." He whirled to the man. "Come. Either show your warrant, or go under arrest for breaking and entering." His eyes lighted fiercely. "Also, you tried to put me out. For shooting with intent to kill——"

The man said evenly: "I have a warrant for the arrest, wherever found, of one Carl Seibert, for burglary! Do you know him?"

"Sure. I'm him. We're both under arrest. I've got you, and you've got me. Come on. We'll start right off for town."

Bartrain chuckled amiably. "Carl Seibert, you are a hot-headed young man," he chided. "Come. The man's errand here is done. I do not believe he would attempt to arrest you. In any case, he has no evidence. Let him go."

Carl cried: "No, by the——"

Bartrain's eyes steadied; and his voice rang crisply with command.

"Carl!"

Carl fell silent, chafing. Bartrain turned to the intruder.

"You may go whenever you please, my friend," he said.

The bandaged man touched his head. "Thanks," he said pleasantly. "Thanks for this bandage, as well as for the rest." He added evenly: "If you're doing crooked work, Mr. Bartrain, best cut it out. Because we'll get you in the end." He crossed to the window, slid one leg through. "I don't know whether you're a spy or not," he said. "But in any case, you're a gentleman." His eyes flickered maliciously toward Carl. "Which is more than can be said for some."

He was gone. Carl stirred. Bartrain said softly: "Carl!" The young man was still. Bartrain touched his shoulder. "There is such a thing as too much loyalty," he said gently. "You would do well to bear this fact in mind."

"They make me mad," said Carl. "I'm sick of this spy-spy-spy business. Any man with a German name—— Pfaugh!"

Bartrain smiled quizzically. "But in many cases, they must be right."

"I don't care," Carl cried. "I don't owe the country anything."

Bartrain seemed about to speak; his lips

moved, then were still. He raised his hand. "Well, well, Carl. Go back to bed. We will talk another time."

Carl, half an hour later, was dropping off to sleep; and he was half smiling with triumph, and at the same time half groaning with sorrow.

During those minutes while he and the bandaged man and Bartrain talked, he had used his eyes. They told him one thing of vast significance. In his encounter with the marauder, he had faced a pistol. Eight or ten shots had been fired, all in that single room. Yet he had scanned every inch of the wall, every bit of furniture. And there was nowhere a bullet hole.

"Blanks!" he whispered. "Blanks! He was using blanks. Which means it was framed up to test me. Helene sends me out on the chase; so she's in it. The man fires at me with blank cartridges. So he's in it. Bartrain. Bartrain must be in it." His heart was sick. "Is she?" he asked himself. "Is she? Is she like her father? Or is she square? She must be square," he swore. "She must be square!"

And after a little, he began to ask: "But what is it they plan? So elaborately? What is their project? Where will they strike? How?"

At about the same time, Bartrain and the man with the bandaged head were talking in Bartrain's study. The amiable man was asking: "Do you think he is honest?"

The man with the bandage said slowly: "Yes. In town, I trailed him. Shard, a service man—you know him? No matter. I do. Shard picked up an acquaintance with him and tried to pump him. I was listening. This man would not be pumped. Later, I tried him myself. Offered him money. Threatened him with arrest. He stuck to his guns. Then—this plant tonight. He came through. Thank the Fates he didn't have a gun, or he'd have shot me."

Bartrain smiled. "I believe he would."

"He's honest, I believe," the bandaged man repeated. "A good man. Nervy. And sore at this country."

Bartrain dropped his hand on the arm of his chair. "So be it," he agreed. "We trust him—so far as it is necessary. And if he makes a wrong move?"

"That can always be met," said the bandaged man grimly.

"So!" Bartrain rose. "I shall go to my bed."

"And I'll get back to town," said the bandaged man. "Have you heard, yet, when the thing is to be?"

Bartrain looked at him bleakly. "Curiosity is ill advised," he said.

The man winced, he was abashed. "Pardon, Herr," he said humbly, in a different voice.

Bartrain smiled amiably. "Good night, my friend."

"Good night, Herr."

Bartrain walked with him to the head of the stairs, watched him go down, listened till the sounds of his departure ceased. As he turned back to his room, he saw Elsa, a dim figure in the faint light in that upper hall. She came lightly toward him.

"Father?"

He put his arms around her. "There, child. I thought you were asleep."

"That man came back."

"But yes."

"Why?"

"He wished to question me, Elsa."

"But why, father?"

He shook his head. "We must expect suspicion, my dear."

She hugged him fiercely. "They're not fair," she cried. "They're not fair—not to trust us. Aren't you glad we are loyal? Good Americans? Isn't it so much better, father darling?"

His arms tightened around her hungrily. His voice broke a little; he whispered: "But yes, baby little one."

She kissed him, hugged him again. When she had slipped back to her room, and he had gone to his, he sat for a time at his bedside, eyes staring into the darkness; and his eyes were wet.

But in the end he rose stiffly, very erect; and in the solitary room there he clicked his heels in their soft old carpet slippers, and saluted some imaginary figure.

Then he crept into bed and lay wide-eyed till dawn, a weary old man.

CHAPTER X.

THE NEWCOMER.

Three days of quiet. On the fourth, at nine in the morning, Bartrain sent for Carl.

"My good friend Harron comes to-day," he said. "He has been fishing, in the North Woods. He comes down by boat; and we pick him up in town. Will you have ready the *Margot?*"

The *Margot* was the forty-footer. Carl touched his cap. "At what hour, sir?"

"When should we start, to meet the boat in town?"

"We can run even with it, sir," said Carl. "When we see it come out from the point, up the bay."

"Very well. You might be ready, and telephone me from the landing."

Carl assented. The motor boat was always in condition, tank full, ready for an instant start. There were no preparations necessary. His morning thus left free, Carl walked down the shore of the island to the weir at Ransfield's point, on the lower end. He had hoped to see Seth there, to have word with him. But old Harve had taken his craft to town with their take on the morning haul. Ransfield was sketching on the rocks and nodded sulkily to Carl's greeting. Carl rounded the island and went back by the other shore. He stopped at that ledge where he had landed from sweet and cantankerous *Sabrina*, and made sure that his packet still lay safely under the roots of the tree above the ledge. Then on to Bartrain's landing.

Three or four neighbors had come from another island. One of them, a girl Elsa's age, was playing tennis with Elsa on the court. Carl saw their motor boat moored off the landing and found the man who had run them over. A gray-haired man, stiff with the precision of an old ship's officer, he was vastly proud of the craft in his charge. He and Carl discussed its merits. Their talk ranged from the motor boats to larger matters. A gray submarine patrol passed, half a mile off the island. She was no larger than the *Margot*, and carried a wireless, but no gun. Her function, to scout the shores of the bay and report any matter that seemed worthy of attention. The two men watched her slide by, and the old man said:

"She's good. That's a full fifteen she's making."

"The *Margot* can pass her," said Carl.

The old man sniffed. "The *Margot* labors at twelve. Now mine, yonder——"

Carl laughed. "If she's so speedy, you should have her out, cleaning up the subs, down the coast."

The old man looked wise. "You'll mark they stay well t' the south'ard. None north of Portland—nor will be."

"Why not?"

"With the destroyer base yonder? Not them. They're canny cowards, the Germans."

"They could have sport in this bay."

"They'll not try it."

Their talk passed on to other matters. After a time, they went up to the house together to lunch. A little after one, Carl returned to the landing and began to watch for the appearance of the boat on which Harron would come. When it stuck its big white nose around the point at last, he went into the boathouse and telephoned up to tell Bartrain it was time they were starting. Bartrain came down at once, and they rowed out to the *Margot*, and started her, and cast off, and swept out around the island's northern end.

The big boat was coming down the bay, paddles slapping the water soundly. Carl headed the *Margot* toward her on a long slant, and when he saw he had the speed, he ran nearer, and took up a position a hundred yards off her port bow, and a little ahead, so that her bow wave should not strike him. On the big boat, passengers crowded forward to watch, and cheered him, and thought he was racing. Bartrain took the glasses from the little lockfast just beside the wheel and scanned the rail of the other craft.

"There he is," he said at last. "Harron—just abeam of the funnels."

Carl marked the man, standing alone upon a lower deck, watching them. Bartrain waved his hand, and Harron answered.

"He sees us," said Bartrain.

They kept their position till they reached the harbor. Then Carl slowed while the big boat worked clumsily into position at the landing; and when she was fast, he ran under her stern to the small stage at one side of the wharf. Bartrain left him there, and returned presently with Harron. Harron carried a soft leather hand bag, and a fishing rod in a metal case. They stepped aboard.

"So, home," said Bartrain amiably; and Carl pushed them off with the boat hook, and started the engine, and left the landing behind them.

He had looked at Harron with interest when the man came aboard; he saw a lean, sun-browned, athletic man of middle years, with a small mustache, a blue eye, a steady bearing. A man of courage and force, he thought. The brown of his skin was leathery.

"He's faced sun and wind many a day,"

Carl thought. And he added: "That's no casual, summer tan. He's had it a long time."

The two men sat down, close together, and well aft. Carl, at the wheel, was ten feet from them; and the rush of the water along the side of the boat, and the noise of the engine just behind their seats, while not loud, were sufficient to drown all but an occasional fragment of their conversations. Nevertheless Carl looked back now and then, studying the newcomer.

"Funny that he has no fly bites—if he's been in the woods," he thought. "I've been there myself. They're on the job——"

But if Harron had not been fishing, why did Bartrain bother to tell Carl the lie? Carl wondered, idly.

They were running, as they came out of the harbor, right across the wind. When they turned north, the wind was behind them; and it began to bring to Carl little snatches of the conversation of the two men. Harmless enough.

He heard Harron say: "Nine trout in a day; and the smallest was two pounds and an ounce——" And a moment later, in reply to an amiable murmur from Bartrain. "Yes, speckled. Lake. A little pond, set between three or four hills."

Carl was a fisherman. He thrilled in spite of himself at Harron's word. The two men behind him talked on. Harron told of night fishing for bass, of one three-pounder that fought so gloriously and so long that even the guide who was paddling him exclaimed.

"There is an exultation about the death of such a fish," said Harron. "It is like killing a man. A man who fights back ——"

Carl wondered, surprised, whether Harron had ever killed a man. He glanced back to study the newcomer again. The aspect of a soldier, undoubtedly. Carl listened with all his ears.

But it came to pass, after a little, that Harron said, and lowered his voice in the saying:

"I came at once."

Carl could not hear Bartrain's reply. And thereafter Harron himself talked in a voice that was little more than a whisper. But there was a curiously ringing and resonant quality about it. The wind caught his tones, bore them to Carl's ears. He heard:

"Ready for me——"

And then, over a half-hour period, always in Harron's voice, a phrase now, a word a moment later.

"Sereth's arrangement—— Sereth—— Great stroke—— Must succeed—any cost —— Sereth—— Men ready—— Ashore here, the night you name—— Final detail—— A bullet, or a knife—— Him gone, they will relax—— Sereth—— Von Schraft."

As Carl caught these fragments, he strove to fit them together. Sereth he knew; knew the man was watched, suspected. But nothing had ever been established against him. There was no evidence. This conversation might have served. He wished that he had arranged to hear. A wire back along the gunwale, a dictograph beside them there. Too late for that, now.

Harron said: "Off the bay, now—waiting ——"

Bartrain murmured something. Harron reassured him. Their heads were very close together.

The *Margot* swept into Bartrain's cove, drew alongside the landing. Carl shut down the engine, threw out the clutch. Bartrain rose, pleasantly amiable.

"So," he said. "Here we are, my friend."

They climbed ashore. Harron, as he passed Carl, gave the young man a steady look from his level-lidded eyes. Carl touched his cap. Bartrain smiled at Carl and said to Harron:

"It was he who overcame our marauder, the other night. I told you ——"

Harron smiled stiffly. "I congratulate you, my man."

Carl touched his cap again. The two went up the slope together, toward the house.

Left alone, while he took the *Margot* back to her mooring, Carl reflected. Bartrain was a German; he meant ill. That was proved by the episode of the pseudo secret-service man. He took elaborate precautions; yet he did nothing. Therefore, he was waiting his opportunity. So many pains, Carl thought, must portend an important stroke. What was it? What could Bartrain do here in the north, far from the center of affairs? Signal submarines? Perhaps. But that was, after all, a simple matter. It could be done anywhere along the coast, by any man who chose. To guard the whole coast line was hopeless. Supply submarines? Carl thought not. He knew this island thoroughly, by now. And he was very sure there

were no secret hoards of oil or food here. What, then? Wireless? No. There was none on the island. Carl was sure of this. But if it were none of these activities that occupied Bartrain, what remained?

"I don't know what it is," Carl told himself. "But it's something—and something big. This Harron, if he's not a Prussian, I'll eat my Sunday hat. He's in it, too. Does his coming mean the stroke is near? Maybe. It may be he will stop a day or so, then move on. Let's find out."

He wished to ask; but that was impossible. He walked up to the house, wondering what move to try; and at the house got his answer without effort. Bartrain sent for him, gave him a baggage check.

"Mr. Harron's trunk is in town," he said. "Please go in and bring it out this afternoon. Or no, it's late. To-morrow morning will do. He will be with us here for some days."

Carl assented. So Harron would stay for some time.

That meant, he was suddenly sure, that the stroke which Bartrain must be planning would come while Harron stayed.

"Which means," he warned himself, "no sleep at all for you, my friend."

Bartrain had a weak heart. He was not to be disturbed at night on any pretext. These were the orders, as Carl had reason to know. But he knew, likewise, that Bartrain had been disturbed, more than once, with no ill effects. And he had wondered, before this, whether there were anything hidden in this arrangement, this rule that he should never be wakened.

Wondering, he studied the lay of the land. Bartrain's bedroom was on the second floor, on the east side of the house. Its wide windows opened on an upper veranda, screened on all sides, and glass inclosed. Bartrain and Mrs. Bartrain sometimes sat there in the afternoon. They could be seen from the ground.

Carl's window, in the upper floor of the garage, gave him no glimpse of the veranda. The day that Harron came, he decided that Bartrain, and Bartrain's window, and Bartrain's upper veranda, would bear watching.

"He would not come down through the house," he told himself, "if he does come down."

His own window looked out into the branches of an apple tree. One came within arm's reach, above the window. When he was in his room that night, he opened the screened window as noiselessly as might be, and cautiously tried his weight on the overhanging branch. It bent, but there was no warning crack.

He was taking a risk. If it were discovered that he had left his room, his usefulness would be gone. Perhaps, also, his life. Carl did not deceive himself as to the business in which he was engaged. It was a matter of life and death, no less. He was taking a risk; but the risk must be taken. He took it.

When the light in Bartrain's room went out, that night, Carl went to his own room, remained there fifteen minutes, then swung out into the apple tree, and down. He did not so much as lock his door. What use in that? If they sought him, his failure to answer a knock would be as damning as his absence. He watched within eyeshot of Bartrain's window till the gray of dawn, then back to his room. Two hours of sleep only he had.

Three nights of this. On the fourth, at three o'clock in the morning, one of the screened windows of the upper veranda opened. A light ladder slid out and down. Bartrain descended; and Harron.

Carl swallowed hard and followed them. Through the garden, into a path through the woods on the slope at one side of the island, down this path—— At the water, the two men sat down upon a bowlder. Carl crouched twenty feet behind them. Their voices were hushed; he could not hear them. The frothing of the waves upon the pebbles drowned them utterly. But he saw, now and then, a faint glow beyond their bodies.

"Signaling," he told himself. "With a little flash."

That light would not penetrate the night for any great distance, he knew. He waited.

An hour. The men grew impatient. Half an hour more.

A boat, invisible in the darkness, grated on the pebbles. The men sprang up. A voice hailed, guttural, Germanic. They answered softly.

Carl stared through the dark. The two men got into the boat. It scraped upon a rock as it was thrust offshore; then Carl heard the soft sound of cautious oars. He drew nearer the water, saw the black shadow of the boat draw out from shore, wished he dared risk swimming after it, watched, listened with all his ears.

Suddenly, he relaxed his intense effort to hear. "Pshaw," he said, with a great relief. "It means just one thing, of course. A sub —out there."

He stood, thinking hard, debating. "Not time for that," he said at last. "Not time. Next time, we'll——"

He waited. After some fifteen minutes, the boat drew in again. Carl receded into the shadows of the wood, saw the men land, turned and ran lightly ahead of them, up the slope, back to the apple tree, climbed, and swung into his window.

In his own room, he looked alertly around. Dawn was coming; there was already light in the air. He could see the bed, the chairs, the dresser.

No sign of an intruder. He slipped off his clothes, lay down and slept with the ease of a tired boy.

CHAPTER XI.

A WORD TO THE WISE.

Carl woke within an hour; and he was alert as his eyes opened. He dressed quickly, slipped downstairs, out.

There was no one astir about the house. None of the men in the garage had been moving when he got up. He went past the tennis court and croquet ground and down through the woods toward that ledge where he had landed on the night of his coming to the island.

He did not whistle. He went swiftly and silently; and when he came to the spot, he knelt and drew from beneath the roots of the tree that packet which he had left there. He opened it.

Two flat and deadly automatic pistols were revealed; a pair of light handcuffs; a braided leather pouch six inches long, weighted with shot at the end. And, wrapped in tissue, a tiny shield pin. He put this in the small pocket of his trousers, just beneath the belt, on the right-hand side. The last thing in the packet was a well-greased box of cartridges for the pistols.

He loaded the pistols and slipped them into his hip pockets, where they rested flat and inconspicuous. He hung the weighted leather pouch inside his left sleeve, at the shoulder, and in such a position that he could free it easily. The handcuffs he wrapped in the original cover and replaced under the tree.

"No use for you," he said. "This will be a case of me, or them."

Fifteen minutes later he was back at the house. It was a quarter before seven. The gardener was at work; and Hawes, the butler, had risen and gone into the house. Carl knew the servants would be stirring there, but, save Elsa, the family usually slept late, and he felt sure that Harron and Bartrain would be in no mood for early rising.

The gardener had a bicycle. Carl went out to where the man was busy with his five-pronged weeding hoe, and asked if he might borrow the wheel.

"Feel like a ride," he explained. "Couldn't sleep after sunrise. It's a great day, isn't it?"

"Sure," said the old gardener. "Go on. That's all right."

Carl thanked him. It was a matter of a few minutes to ride down to Ransfield's. But when he came in sight of the weir, he frowned regretfully. Old Harve's schooner was a quarter mile away, making for town, towing its dories behind it. They had drawn the weir at daybreak, when the tide served.

Carl glanced quickly around him, backed out of sight of Ransfield's place in a clump of bushes, took a handkerchief in either hand, and began to wave them jerkily after the departing schooner.

"There's a chance—a chance," he told himself.

But no answering signal came back to him. In the end, he gave up.

"No use," he said. "I'm on my own for to-day, at least. They'll be back by noon. After all, there's no great rush."

He rode back to the house and found that there was a very great rush indeed. Hawes told him Miss Elsa had been asking for him for ten minutes. When Carl reported to her, she was at breakfast, alone, eating hurriedly, rosy with excitement.

"Please, Mr. Seibert, get the *Margot* ready," she bade him. "I shall want you right away."

He touched his cap. This was a chance. He might find opportunity to land, to send a message.

"Hurry," she bade him.

He went down to the landing, got the *Margot* ready. As he ran her alongside the landing stage, Miss Elsa appeared. She stepped lightly in.

"Go right over to Steeple Harbor," she said. "I want to get some lobsters."

Steeple Harbor was a dozen miles away.

He said respectfully: "You might get them nearer, miss."

She shook her head. "Not so large, nor so nice. Steeple Harbor, please."

He submitted. They shot out of the cove and set their course. She sat aft, ten feet from him. Since that night when he had overcome the man in the living room, Elsa had looked coldly upon Carl. There was no longer a friendly tone in her voice, a friendly warmth in her eyes. And he, surprisingly, was glad of this. He had acted, that night, a part, an unpleasant part. He had been bitter, sullen. He had denounced the man whom she must think a government agent. And for that denunciation she was cold to him.

"Which means that she's square," he told himself jubilantly. "She's square. I knew she was!"

But her father was not square. When he thought of the sorrow he must bring to her, he winced. Nevertheless, that she herself was loyal was a big thing. She would understand.

He was glad she was cold; yet when the warm wind across the water, and the cries of the gulls that rose in a white flock from a point they passed, and the laughing blue of the waves charmed her out of her silence, he was more glad than he had been before. She came forward, stood beside him.

"These are very particular lobsters," she explained, as though there had been no silence. "Senator Sheridan is coming home with us this evening, you know. And he loves them."

Carl exclaimed: "Sheridan? I didn't know he was—— Where is he?" He was suddenly intent.

"Why, don't you read the papers?" she laughed. "He's over at the island. He's going to speak there this afternoon. And then come home with us. He and father are great friends, you know."

It was true that Carl had not seen a paper for days. His own tasks had absorbed his attention. Sheridan up here. On the island. Coming to Bartrain's home tonight. And a submarine lying in the bay.

His jaw hardened. So that was it. Sheridan. They were after Sheridan!

His first impulse was to tell the girl, to turn the *Margot* about and race for port and give the warning. But suppose she did not believe him? He had no word of proof. He could only guess. He would only anger her. He would only battle fruitlessly against her trust in her father.

His eyes swept the bay. There was no craft in sight within miles. But there was still time. The only thing to do was to go on, watch his chance to send word to those who waited. A word, would do it. A sentence, at the most.

He found himself answering her questions without knowing what he said. She was very gay, very happy; she charmed him out of his own concerns. He gave himself up at last to the pleasure of being with her, to the joy of sluicing through the blue waters of the bay. They drove on, and Steeple Harbor opened out, at last, before them. The entrance was narrow; and a rocky islet not thirty feet across divided it in the middle. Atop this rock ospreys had from time immemorial built their nest. It grew each year. They saw the birds now, one swooping and hovering overhead, another standing on the nest. The young lifted scrawny heads, opened clamorous mouths.

The channel lay to the left of this rock. "I always want to go to the right," Elsa said. "Just to see what will happen. Could the *Margot* go through?"

"No, I think not. Except at high tide," he told her. "At any rate, the left-hand way is safe."

They drove in, and the hawks screamed at them. Up the narrow channel, then alongside the float at the landing. Elsa leaped ashore.

"Wait," she said. "I won't be long."

She was back in ten minutes. During that time, no other person had come in sight; and there was no hint of the chance Carl sought, to send his warning. She came back disappointed.

"They've sent all theirs away, only this morning," she said. "We'll have to try at ——"

She hesitated, finger pressing her soft cheek, eyes thoughtful. "Marsden," she suggested. "We'd better try there."

Carl took hope. There would be a chance, at Marsden, to telephone, to send the warning word he must send. They threaded their way down the channel and headed across the southern end of the bay toward the mainland; and the wind warmed them, and the waves lifted and swung them, and the herring gulls circled and dipped around and about.

Elsa took the wheel for a while, and talked to Carl, gayly, over her shoulder. But for all she was so gay, her eyes were clouded now and then; she did not meet his glance so steadily. Carl marked this; he wondered why. It made him uncomfortable. He could not guess that Elsa was thinking how much better she liked him when they were alone together than when her father was about.

"He's like another man," she thought. "Cheerful, gentle, gay. And when father is here—he is sulky, soured. I wonder what makes the difference? Why?"

The two fell silent, after a time. They were content to be side by side; she on the high, steersman's stool, he standing at her shoulder, or going back now and then to listen to the engine's steady stroke. The *Margot* shouldered the long swells that came in from the sea.

The white houses of Marsden were already in sight, and Carl was beginning to frame the message he would send, when Elsa swung the *Margot's* bow suddenly about and into the north. He was surprised. He asked:

"What is it?"

She pointed to a dingy motor boat lying at anchor half a mile to the northward, off the shore of one of the small islands there. A hundred yards away from it, a man in a flat-bottomed skiff was busy with something in the water.

"There's a lobsterman," she said. "If he has any, I'd rather get them from him. Those in town are always picked over."

Carl started to protest, to argue. But what could he say? He could think of nothing, and contented himself, perforce, with wishing the lobsterman the worst of luck. So they sped up the bay, passed his rusty launch, and ran within hailing distance of his skiff before at Elsa's nod Carl threw out the clutch and slowed the engine to a quiet pumping. The lobsterman looked across at them. A thin man, with a big mustache blackly clouding the lower half of his face, and a stubble of black whiskers on his gaunt cheeks. He was not prepossessing. When they stopped, he was engaged in fastening a new bait on the spike inside the lobster pot he had just drawn over the gunwale of his craft. Elsa called to him:

"Any luck?"

The man from a full mouth spat overside. He said dolefully: "Not nawthin'."

Elsa smiled. "I saw you take one out of that pot."

The man nodded. "Got a few," he confessed.

"How much are they?" Elsa asked.

"Thirty-fi' cents."

Elsa smiled again. "Won't you please come alongside and let me see them? I want to get some."

The man finished his business with the pot, slid it over the gunale, threw the buoy after it, took up his oars and rowed glumly toward them. When he came near the *Margot* Carl hooked the skiff with his boat hook and held it near without allowing it to bump the snowy side of the forty-footer. Elsa, on tiptoe, looked into the stern of the skiff and saw a tangled, slow-moving, rattling heap of green-shelled creatures, and she clapped her hands.

"But—what beauties!" she exclaimed. "I never saw such big ones."

The lobsterman looked at her; he looked at Carl, and he winked as though to a sympathetic soul. Elsa was pointing.

"That one, and that one, and that——"

When she had completed her purchase—Carl stowed the lobsters in a basket from the cubby under the bow—the *Margot* left the lobsterman behind, and Elsa waved her hand to him. The scrubby individual in the skiff was engaged in stuffing into a greasy pouch the bright, clean bills with which she had paid him. He jerked his hand in answer to her gesture.

"So," said Elsa, and took the wheel. "We can go right home."

Carl nodded. There was nothing else to do. But thereafter, while Elsa steered, and talked to him, he stood behind her and watched the spreading reaches of the bay for the chance he must find to send a warning. Anxiety was beginning to oppress him. This stroke that was to fall. He tried to guess just what it would be. He considered the elements of the situation. Bartrain, elaborately planning. Harron, arriving in time to participate, with his wind-browned cheeks and his false tale of fishing in the North. The submarine the two men must have visited, off the island, the night before. Where was that submarine now, he wondered? Asleep in the shallows of the bay. Perhaps within reach of his eye? He searched the waters. And finally, as the possible center of all these preparations, Senator Sheridan, coming to Bartrain's

home this night. Sheridan—the spiritual heart of the nation's will to war. Carl frowned with his own perplexities. Certainly danger threatened Sheridan; danger which he must avert. Easy to warn the senator himself, when they should go to hear him speak this afternoon. But to do so, without evidence, would be to court ridicule. It would be to scare off the conspirators. Sheridan knew Bartrain of old, trusted him with the strong trust of a strong man. He would never believe, if Carl were to tell him.

Yet a warning should be given, a warning of what was afoot. So that, if need arose, he himself should not be forced to fight the fight unaided. He groaned at the ill luck that had caused him to miss old Harve and the schooner and Seth, that morning. If he could have spoken with Seth!

And with the thought, as they swept up toward Bartrain's home island, he saw Harve's schooner working over from the mainland in a fashion that would bring it across their own course. He calculated distances. The schooner would, as matters lay, pass far astern of the motor boat.

He thought of wigwagging to Seth. But that was dangerous. Elsa might see. Bartrain, from the island, might see, and be alarmed. Some watcher of whom he had no knowledge might read the signaled message.

He considered. And presently went aft to look at the engine. Elsa glanced over her shoulder, from the wheel.

"She doesn't sound right," he called. "Some little thing—— No matter, I guess."

Elsa said: "It sounds all right to me."

He nodded. She turned her attention once more to their course.

Carl waited until he judged they lay fairly in the path of old Harve's schooner. Then his hand dropped for an instant to the engine. He twirled the carburetor adjustment valve.

Almost at once, the engine began to stammer, and smoke poured from her exhaust. Abruptly, one cylinder choked, then another. Then the four, with a last explosion, died. The *Margot* slid slowly forward, stopped.

When Elsa turned in surprise, Carl was bent over the engine, frowning, puzzled. The carburetor was out of her sight; he screwed the valve back to normal, as she came aft.

"What is it?" she asked. "The *Margot* never did that before."

Carl shook his head. "I don't exactly know," he said. "She seemed to be getting a poor spark—weak—slow-burning."

He began to test the coil and the batteries. And after a little he took out the spark plugs, one by one, and cleaned and tested them, while Elsa watched, kneeling in one of the chairs in the cockpit and resting her arms on the back of it. Carl straightened up once, as though his bent back irked him, and saw the schooner bearing slowly down on them. She was running under power, plugging along at a slow six knots, her sails idle in the hostile wind. Carl labored. The schooner drew astern, and her engine stopped. Seth hailed them:

"Need any help?" he called.

Elsa smiled at him. "No thank you," she said. "We'll be all right in a minute."

Carl stood up while he scraped the points of a spark plug. The schooner was close by now. "We've got to be," he said. "The *Margot's* got to run right this afternoon—bringing the senator over."

Seth nodded. "Hear'd as how he 'uz going to stay 'ith you a spell. When's he coming?"

"After the speech," said Carl. "Did you ever hear him? Going over?"

"Never did," said Seth. "Don't 'low to go over. Busy."

"If you want to see him," said Carl, and his eyes of a sudden met squarely those of Seth. "If you want to see him, you just lie up in our course and take a look as we go by."

Seth said, a little doubtfully: "Pshaw! 'Tain't wuth it. He ain't but a man."

"It's worth it. Don't worry. He's a big man," said Carl.

"Waal," Seth drawled. "We mought. Mebbe."

Carl had replaced the last plug. The schooner was drifting out of earshot.

"Ignition's all right," he told Elsa. "Must be something else. Seems to me I smell gas."

She seemed not to have heard him. She was looking thoughtfully after the schooner, which had started its engine and was again footing on its way. Carl knelt.

He was filled with elation. Seth was warned; he knew the man had understood. He drained the carburetor.

When the engine, having worked the surplus gas out of her cylinders, presently began her even stroke again, they sped on,

up the island, around to the landing and stopped. Carl helped the girl out and laid the lobsters on the stage.

"Will you bring those up to the house?" she asked.

"Yes, miss."

"And—Carl!"

He looked at her, surprised at something in her tone.

"Be sure and fix that carburetor, Carl," she said, and was gone.

He was so absorbed with startled wondering whether she had understood his ruse that he failed to mark that she had called him, for the first time, by his given name.

CHAPTER XII.

RANDOLPH SHERIDAN.

There are some men who cannot praise or flatter without seeming to insult; there are other men, smiled upon by the gods, who can insult and seem to flatter.

Senator Randolph Sheridan was the only man in public life who could stand before a hostile audience, denounce every man in that audience in unmeasured terms, and at the end see every man shout wildly in praise of Randolph Sheridan.

There was a story told about this man. Once, in his younger days, he went upon a water trip along the New England coast. On this trip, he stood one day at the rail, leaning on his elbows, his hands clasped as they projected beyond the rail. Two other men stood with him. Astern of the ship, gulls floated like bits of white paper in the wind; and all about, smaller birds of many sorts were wheeling. Birds of the sea, with raucous voices and swift wings, and filled with grace indescribable.

And as Sheridan stood there, his clasped hands projecting beyond the rail, one of these little birds dropped lightly, and perched upon his wrist. It remained there for a long fraction of a second, calm, unflurried, its black eyes shining. It folded and refolded its slender wings. It turned its little head and looked up at him. He stood very still.

Then, still unalarmed, it spread its wings, rose lightly into the air, was gone.

There were some who saw in this a manifestation of the old fairy-supernatural forces in which the most credulous like to fancy they believe. They said the little bird was a fairy, a messenger from the invisible. They said the mantel of the golden heart and the silver tongue had fallen upon this man.

Sheridan used to laugh at the story; but certainly there was a force in the man. Once upon a time he went, in his campaigning, to speak to a crowd of striking mill workers. Thousands of them. Voters, whose suffrages he must have. His friends warned him to step lightly, to be diplomatic. He shook his fine old head at them.

"These men are wrong," he said. "Their strike is wrong. I shall tell them so."

And he did. For an hour, he berated the striking men. And at first they sullenly stirred where they stood, and growled at him; and after a little they ceased to stir, and began to listen; and at the end they lifted up their voices as one man and cheered him for minutes on end. Also, he carried that city substantially, the second Tuesday following.

This man had scolded the country for half a dozen years because it was unfit for war; he preached preparedness when his listeners smiled scornfully; he continued this preachment when Europe took fire; he became, little by little, the voice of the growing numbers who believed the nation should be ready to take a strong man's part. His followers grew. His enemies admitted his fearlessness, and his sincerity. And by and by they became his followers.

When the United States went to war, Sheridan tried to enlist as a private. He was over age; he was refused. He sought a commission, based on old experience in the field, and was again refused. He offered himself in any capacity. And he gave himself to service as the mouthpiece of the nation's will to war.

There was no man, short of the president himself, in whom the people more devoutly trusted; there was no man who more uplifted and strengthened the national heart than he.

This was the man, Carl Seibert believed, against whom Bartrain, and Harron, and the unknown others were conspiring. And Carl was very much relieved indeed to know that Seth was warned, and that Seth and old Harve's schooner would be at hand if they were needed, during the hours that were to come.

Sheridan would speak that afternoon on the island eight or ten miles from Bartrain's landing. Bartrain, and Harron, and Mrs.

Bartrain and Elsa came down to where Carl held ready the *Margot*, at a little after one o'clock. Hawes, the butler, followed them. Bartrain said to Carl, aside:

"I'm taking Hawes, in case he's needed when we bring Senator Sheridan home. As for you——" His eyes were steady and hard: "I believe you are a man upon whom I can count."

"I hope so, sir."

"Please remember," said Bartrain, "that your concern is to handle the *Margot* as I bid you; and that what may take place in the *Margot* is no concern of yours."

Carl looked puzzled. "I understand, sir."

Bartrain nodded. They got into the *Margot*, and drew away.

Sheridan was to speak from the veranda of the big hotel on the island. Below the veranda spread a pleasant lawn, which ran down to the rocky shores where the waves fretted at the granite. Room on this lawn for any number of auditors. When the *Margot* drew alongside the landing stage, there were already some hundreds gathered there. Bartrain and the others landed, and Bartrain bade Carl run the *Margot* into a cove, a quarter of a mile above, and anchor there, and then be at hand to catch Bartrain's signal when the time came to depart. Carl touched his cap, and he and Hawes ran up into the cove, left the *Margot* there, rowed ashore and lifted the tender above the tide's reach.

Carl asked Hawes: "Shall you go and hear him?"

Hawes shook his head sourly. He was a man past middle age, with a hard and inscrutable face of the sort habitual to butlers. "I've friends hereabouts," he said. "I shall be here at the tender before the speaking is over."

Carl nodded. "Guess I'll go up to the hotel," he said.

They were early. Sheridan was not to speak until four. Carl asked a casual question or two among the throng before the hotel, and got the information he required. Sheridan was lunching at one of the summer homes, half a mile away. Carl located Bartrain and Harron and the two women on the hotel veranda; and then he sought among the cars parked behind the hotel until he found a chauffeur who looked reasonable. He told this man there was a girl, a lady's maid, whom he wished to see, at a certain house.

"I haven't time to walk," he explained. "Run me over, will you?"

He himself was in livery, dark-gray stuff with a visored cap not unlike that which the chauffeur wore. The man recognized a professional comrade, and agreed.

Five minutes later, Carl was in the kitchen of the residence where Sheridan was lunching. He was taking chances. If Bartrain's allies were here, he was lost. But the chance must be taken. He sent word to the master of the house.

In ten minutes, Carl was closeted with this man and with another. This other was small, slight, hard-bitten, with thick hair gray about his temples, and a keen blue eye. The senator. Carl spoke swiftly, told who he was, convinced them, told what he knew.

"It's for you to decide, sir," he told the senator. "I don't know what they mean to do. It may be anything. If you go along with Bartrain, we'll find out and net the lot of them. If you don't go, they'll take alarm. If you go, you'll be in peril——"

The senator said soberly: "Bartrain is my friend. I've known him for years. He is a man to be trusted. I believe you are wrong."

Carl nodded. "I may be. I—pray so, sir."

Sheridan looked at him shrewdly. "A strange remark, that. Why do you pray he may be trustworthy."

Carl started to speak, found nothing to say; and abruptly, Sheridan smiled.

"It is possible that I understand," he said. "In any case—I shall go with him."

"Will you have a pistol?" Carl asked.

Sheridan shook his head impatiently. "They tell me I'm too old to fight," he said. "That's your task, my friend."

Carl rose, nodded. "I will see to it, sir."

Ten minutes later, he was mingling, unremarked, with the throng that waited before the hotel.

Sheridan spoke for an hour; he was as eloquent, as forceful, as courageous as of old. And the hundreds who stood on the lawn below the veranda listened in sober silence, stirring at his periods, applauding briefly now and then when he paused in his address. When they applauded thus, it was done hurriedly; and they were quick to quiet again, so that they might miss nothing

of the words that were to come. Carl had heard the senator before; he never tired of hearing him. But he took note, once or twice, of Bartrain and the others, sitting on the veranda; and he saw Elsa dabbing at her eyes with her handkerchief, and cheering and clapping her small hands when the chance came. Mrs. Bartrain listened calmly. She was always calm; a large and serene woman, never easily surprised. Harron and Bartrain, side by side behind the women, did as their neighbors did; they were remarkable for nothing. Carl thought Bartrain was perturbed and uneasy, but the amiable man hid well this secret unrest. Harron showed no sign of anxiety.

After it was over, when Sheridan had shaken hands with all who could come within reach of him, he and Bartrain and others had tea together at the hotel, while the throng in carriages, and cars and motor boats and excursion steamers scattered here and there upon the island, or up and down the bay to their homes. Carl waited near the door. It was six o'clock when Bartrain came to the door and nodded to him and bade him bring the *Margot* from her moorings to the landing. Carl went at once to where the tender lay upon the shore, and found Hawes waiting, unexcited, there. They got the tender into the water, rowed out, loosed the *Margot,* and ran around the point and down to the landing and stood off and on there till they saw Bartrain and the senator, with the others close behind, coming down the road from the hotel.

A man in livery carried a heavy bag of Sheridan's. Carl ran in to the landing, and took this bag aboard, and held the boat steady while the others stepped in. There was still a crowd about; they cheered as the *Margot* ran out into the open bay, and Senator Sheridan looked back and lifted his hat and waved it to them.

Then he and the others settled themselves for the run to Bartrain's landing. Elsa sat with her back to Carl, just behind his seat at the wheel. Mrs. Bartrain was on one of the cushioned seats at the side of the boat. Harron sat on the other side, opposite her. Bartrain and Sheridan took chairs, side by side, just forward of the engine and facing forward. Hawes busied himself in the little decked cabin in the bow, forward of the wheel.

They ran down the shore of the island to its southern end, rounded this. Hawes offered glasses, and little plates of small cakes. Then cigars and cigarettes. Harron took a cigarette, Bartrain a cigar. Sheridan refused the liquor, the cakes, the tobacco. He rummaged a brown pipe from his pockets, filled it, set it alight.

"I always prefer a pipe, when I am in such a position that it will not offend," he said, and smiled at Mrs. Bartrain. She nodded courteously.

Carl, watching and listening while he handled the *Margot,* wondered whether there were significance in the senator's refusal to accept meat and drink and tobacco. He did not look around. He and Sheridan had exchanged a single glance as the senator boarded the *Margot;* no more.

They rounded the southern end of the island and saw, far across the open bay, Bartrain's place high upon its wooded hill. The *Margot* nosed that way, began to eat up the half a dozen miles of water that intervened.

Halfway across, plugging up the bay against the wind, Carl saw with a breath of relief the schooner of old Harve Jones, with its dories towing astern. Help, if he needed it, was there.

He looked back to where the group amidships chatted cheerfully, then gave his attention to the *Margot,* and with every nerve alert waited to meet whatever stroke it might be that was to come.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NOOSED LINE.

The *Margot* was an elegant craft, made for comfort, and at the same time for speed and beauty. Some forty feet over all, she had the long, straight lines that hid her length. Her knifelike bow was decked over for fifteen feet; and beneath this deck there was a decently comfortable little cabin, leather upholstered, with seats around the sides, and a fixed table in the center, arranged for cards, or for serving a luncheon. The pointed angle forward was cut off and made into a tiny cupboard, where Hawes found, this day, the materials for the refreshments he offered those in the waist of the boat. Round deadlights lighted this cabin; and two ports in the bow could be opened to let the wind sweep through.

The engine was housed in a pit astern, the clutch being manipulated by a lever beside the wheel, which was set at the after end of

the cabin. Carl was accustomed to start the engine going when he left his mooring, and then slide into place the movable deck which covered it. Thereafter, he regulated its speed from his seat at the wheel.

This arrangement left the oval cockpit, some fifteen feet long, free for passengers. A leather-cushioned seat ran along the sides and across the after end of the cockpit. Besides this, the beam of the boat was sufficient to allow the placing of three or four comfortable wicker chairs in the cockpit, so that a dozen people or more might be pleasantly accommodated.

Carl's own place was on a high, fixed stool at the wheel. This stool was high so that he might see over the decked roof of the cabin. The commutator lever and the electric switch were in a glass-inclosed cubby within reach of his left hand; the clutch lever was at his right. Directly in front of him there was a holdfast in which he kept the binoculars, and the necessary papers. He had thought, before they started out, of putting one or both of his pistols in this receptacle, but did not do so for fear Elsa or some other might come to seek the binoculars. His pistols were on his hips, and he took care that his coat should hide their bulk.

Elsa was sitting in one of the chairs, three or four feet behind Carl and with her back to him, listening to the talk of the others, and venturing, now and then, a gay little word. Carl marked that she was quieter than usual, and guessed this was because she was a little subdued by the presence of the senator. He knew she must hold that fine old man very high. Mrs. Bartrain sat on one of the cushioned seats at Elsa's right hand; and her left side was thus turned toward Carl. Opposite Mrs. Bartrain, but a little farther aft, Harron idled with his cigarette. He was at Elsa's left; his right hand toward Carl. Senator Sheridan sat in one of the chairs, at Harron's left, facing forward. Bartrain was at Sheridan's left hand, also in a chair.

Carl looked around once when they started out, to fix in his mind the position of each one in the group. Later, when they were forced to move their chairs a little as Hawes passed to and fro among them, he looked around again to be sure their relative positions were undisturbed. But for the rest, he was forced to sit with his back to the others; he could not use his eyes; he must trust altogether to his ears for the warning he hoped to catch before the stroke should fall. His nerves began to jangle under the strain of inaction. It seemed to him he could detect, in the conversation behind him, an undercurrent of tension, a growling tone like the growl of beasts who prepare to strike.

The senator was talking of the war, forcing the others to discuss it with him. Bartrain made half a dozen ineffectual efforts to divert him; he spoke of butterflies, of his last big-game hunt, of Brazil. At first the senator ignored these matters; in the end he said pleasantly:

"My dear Bartrain, this war is so big that it has driven all those ancient hobbies clear out of my mind. Now, do you not agree with me that the Prussian has been utterly damnable? Damnable?"

And Bartrain said uneasily: "Why yes, of course, senator."

Sheridan turned to Harron. "I should judge you had seen service, sir," he said. "You have the military bearing. Was it in France?"

Harron replied indolently: "No. South Africa. The Boers. I had no idea the marks remained upon me to this day. I got out of it a distaste for war which has remained with me."

Senator Sheridan said warmly: "We all have a distaste for war. Which is one of the very good reasons why we are now fighting the greatest war of history."

Harron must have made some gesture of dissent; for Sheridan asked: "You do not agree?"

"Hardly."

The senator asked quietly: "What do you consider our motive to be, then?"

"All wars," said Harron, "are matters of business, pure and simple. Money is the root of all evil; and war is the greatest of evils."

"You are wrong, sir," Sheridan said, with a trace of heat in his tones. "You are wrong. I fear you and I should never agree."

"I find very few people here in this country with whom I am in agreement," Harron assented. "They deceive themselves. Your interests became more and more bound up with those of your allies; in the end you saw it was a question of fighting, or failing to collect your debts. Therefore—you came in."

Sheridan asked icily: "Why do you speak

of us in the second person, instead of the first. Are you not an American?"

"Oh, yes, by birth, breeding, what you will."

"Then why?"

"I am a citizen of the world."

"Very well," Sheridan assented. "Then you must take an interest in the fate of the world. The Prussian wishes to make one kind of world; we are fighting to make safe another kind. Where do your good wishes lie?"

"With the poor devils on both sides who have to do the fighting," said Harron.

Sheridan's voice hardened. "My dear sir," he said, "this is not the day when a man may be neutral without incurring odium. Are you for Prussia; or are you for democracy?"

Bartrain interrupted amiably. "Come! This war haunts men's minds. Let us forget it."

Sheridan retorted: "My friend, this war haunts my mind. I cannot forget it, nor do I wish to forget it. To forget it is to shirk an obligation. There is an obligation on every man to take sides, in this matter. If he does not take sides, he is a shirker, for whom the world will hereafter have no place. I do not wish to be unpleasant; but I am very much in earnest in asking Mr. Harron where his sympathies lie."

Harron said coldly: "I have no wish to force my sympathies on any man."

There was a moment's silence. Bartrain spoke to Hawes, in a tone that had a trace of haste in it.

"Hawes, a match, please."

Carl heard Hawes go aft. Senator Sheridan said steadily: "My dear Bartrain, this is very unpleasant for me. I am sorry, but I must ask you to——"

Mrs. Bartrain interrupted, with a low exclamation: "Oh! What is that, floating, ahead there, senator?"

Carl's eyes swept the water to discover the object to which she referred. He saw nothing save old Harve's schooner, a mile ahead. But even while he looked, he became conscious of a sudden, terrible tension behind him.

A chair leg scraped. There was an exclamation from the senator. And Carl heard Elsa, just behind him, stumble to her feet, and heard her cry, in amazed terror:

"Father! What are you——"

He whirled, and saw Hawes, standing behind the senator's chair, and drawing tight about Sheridan's shoulders and elbows a length of stout, noosed line.

CHAPTER XIV.

BATTLE.

As Carl turned and saw Sheridan, Bartrain half rose in his seat, and Carl saw there was a pistol in the hand of the amiable man. Bartrain pointed with this pistol down the bay.

"That way, top speed, Seibert," he commanded.

Carl debated desperately in a lightning flash whether or no he should obey. And even while he debated, he photographed forever on his mind the picture presented by the group behind him.

Senator Sheridan, an old man, after his first exclamation, had made no struggle against those who attacked him. Hawes, standing behind his chair where he had gone on Bartrain's errand of the matches, had dropped the noose over the senator's arms, swept it tight, and wound the line around and around the other before Sheridan could stir. At the same time, he pressed the old man down into his chair, and in an instant Sheridan was bound there and helpless.

Even if he had chosen to struggle, he could not have done so. When Mrs. Bartrain spoke, calling every eye forward to the water ahead of them, Hawes had acted as though on a signal. When, thereafter, Sheridan's eyes flashed to Bartrain, he saw the amiable man's pistol leveled at him. He looked toward Harron; Harron also held a pistol, pressed against his side.

Mrs. Bartrain, thus far, sat calmly in her place. Of all those in the *Margot,* only Carl and Elsa were surprised.

Elsa, after that first cry of astonishment, had flung herself aft. Not toward her father, but toward the senator. She tugged at the line, tried to thrust Hawes away, fought, cried out.

Bartrain gripped her right arm; Mrs. Bartrain took her left. They forced the girl back, between them, and into her chair. Mrs. Bartrain, with a strength of which Carl would not have believed her capable, held Elsa there. Bartrain said steadily to his daughter:

"My child, be still."

Elsa cried: "Father, what are you doing?

You can't—— You—— Carl, don't let them!" She turned to appeal to him, where he stood beside his stool, at the wheel. And Bartrain snapped:

"Seibert. Obey. I bade you turn southward."

His pistol was ready, level. Not because of that weapon, but because he saw the senator was in no immediate danger, and because he wished to wait and see what should develop, Carl obeyed. He resumed his place upon the stool; he swung the *Margot* around and headed her south, and at Bartrain's command, he moved the commutator lever to top speed.

At the same time, his glance flickered across the water toward where Harve Jones' schooner was plugging toward them; and after a moment he saw the schooner turn, change its course, run on a long slant to intercept them; and while he watched, the schooner began to pick up speed surprisingly. Its six knots became eight, became ten, became twelve. The *Margot* was doing fifteen; but as their courses lay, Carl thought the schooner would intercept them. He could afford, for the moment, to wait. The others did not see.

Elsa and her mother and Bartrain, behind him, were speaking swiftly. Sheridan had fallen into absolute silence; Harron watched beside him, pistol in hand. Elsa cried:

"What does it mean mother? Father? What are you doing?"

Bartrain said only: "Hush, Elsa. This is not your affair."

"But it is my affair. I want to know. You've tied his hands!"

Then Mrs. Bartrain exclaimed, with a fury and a bitterness of which Carl would not have believed her capable:

"You are right, Elsa. We have tied his hands. He is the greatest single enemy of the fatherland in this accursed nation; and we have tied his hands. He is ours. And to-morrow, these fools who have applauded him will curse his name."

Elsa cried: "Never! You are so terribly wrong. You are bringing down such a vengeance! There will be a million men to avenge him!"

Mrs. Bartrain laughed aloud, a terrible laugh. "No, Elsa. Know you, they will find in his room a letter from Von Bernstorff himself, bidding him do as he has done, excite this nation of fools to war. They will believe he has fled for fear of discovery."

"Fled?" Elsa cried. "Don't you suppose there are fifty people watching you, now from the islands. They will know."

"They will see him, presently, go aboard a submarine, in broad daylight, here in the bay. They will see that craft submerge, depart. They will say he has fled."

"Mother!" the girl begged. "You're not doing this? Not my mother and my father?"

There was something so terribly accusing in her voice that her mother was silenced; and Bartrain himself answered her.

"Elsa, my baby," he begged. "We must. For the fatherland. Be silent. You will be seen from the shore."

Her voice rang. "Be seen?" she echoed. "I want to be seen. I want them to know this is not my work. I want them to know! Oh father, mother, I thought you were Americans."

"Always a German, as you are, Elsa."

"Not I," she told him swiftly. "Not I, father. You may be a German; mother may be. But I—— Why, I was born in New York, father. I went to school there. My friends are there. I've always been American. Always will be."

"Not so," he said stiffly. "In the fatherland, you will be——"

"No," she said. "I stay. I stay here."

"You come with us all, presently, with Von Schraft."

"Von Schraft?"

"Waiting for us, now. The submarine is——"

"If you do this thing," she said steadily, "if you do this thing, you are no longer father and mother of mine."

"Silent, child," said her mother contemptuously. "Be not a baby!"

Elsa cried, piteous appeal in her voice. "Please, mother, father——"

There was no answer to her then. In the moment's silence, Bartrain spoke to Carl. "A little to starboard, Seibert," he said crisply. "Leave that schooner to one side."

Mrs. Bartrain looked toward the schooner. "What is it doing here?" she asked quickly. "Not half a mile away. And—Paul! It is racing. It never went so fast before."

Elsa took advantage of her mother's preoccupation; she slipped out of the chair, leaped forward, caught Carl's arm.

"Carl, Carl," she cried. "Stop them. Don't let them do this. Please, Carl——"

She tugged at him; and Carl seemed to lose his balance under her pull. He slid off the stool, his hand swept back toward it as though to catch himself. It came out, thrust forward, with a pistol.

The man Harron was the first to see the weapon. His own stabbed at Carl, and the bullet swept past and splintered the glass front of the instrument board. Carl's answering ball struck Harron's wrist, and his weapon clattered on the floor. Hawes, behind him, stooped to pick it up. Carl snapped a command, and paralyzed Hawes where he stood.

For a long instant, every one was deadly still. Harron nursed his wounded arm. Hawes stood, half crouching, behind the senator. Bartrain, his pistol dangling, sat in his chair by the senator's side. Sheridan, in his bonds, smiled faintly. Mrs. Bartrain, who had half risen to seize Elsa, sank back in her seat. Carl, Elsa at his side, watched them all, held them all with his eyes.

Only for an instant; then he snapped a command. "Elsa, get life preservers from the cabin. Under the seat. Be quick!"

She breathed at his side: "Yes, yes, Carl."

He heard her go. The others faced him. Carl said softly:

"Bartrain, drop your pistol."

The weapon fell from the dangling hand of the amiable man. Elsa came with life preservers.

"Here are two," she whispered.

Mrs. Bartrain was nearest Carl. He thrust one toward her. "Put it on," he said.

The woman was in something like a panic. She was trembling; she obeyed in a frenzy of fear. She stammered something. Elsa had come with the other life preservers. Carl hesitated; then to Mrs. Bartrain:

"Go into the cabin," he said.

She screamed. "You're going to sink us! Lock me in?"

"Be quick. I'll——"

Senator Sheridan said quietly: "Gentle, Seibert."

Seibert nodded. "Yes, sir." To the woman: "Into the cabin."

She went in, tottering. Carl spoke to Elsa. "Fasten the clasp. Lock her in."

Elsa obeyed. Carl stepped a little farther aft, handed a life preserver to Bartrain. "Put it on." And when the other's fumbling fingers had made it fast. "Over with you, now."

Bartrain stared, gasped: "W-what?"

"Into the water!"

"I—can't——"

"It's warm. Float. You'll be picked up. Quickly, now!"

Bartrain stood up uncertainly. He climbed on the seat. The *Margot*, running with no hand at the wheel, caught a wave abeam, and rolled him bubbling overside. They saw him come to the surface astern, gasp and flounder there, float quietly.

Harron next. He refused the life preserver, dove cleanly overside. For all his injured arm, they saw him swiming stoutly. Then Hawes. The butler sullenly obeyed their commands.

When only Carl, Elsa and the bound man in the chair remained aboard the *Margot*, Senator Sheridan said quietly:

"Very well done, Seibert."

Elsa ran to him, began to loose his bonds. Carl was searching with the binoculars the waters ahead. He had the wheel again, driving on the southward course Bartrain had given him. Sheridan said:

"Don't forget the submarine. We must have that, young man."

Carl nodded. "Hope so, sir." Sheridan was free. Carl called Elsa. "Hold her as she is," he bade her, and when she took the wheel he climbed on the high bow and wigwagged a message to old Harve Jones' schooner that was running down on them now, not two hundred yards away.

"Submarine lying ahead somewhere," he signaled. "Follow me, not too close. Don't scare them. Be ready."

And he watched and saw Seth, in the bow of the schooner, signal a brief: "O. K."

Elsa, white of face, asked softly: "Where are we going?"

He looked at her. "You can shoot?"

"Yes."

He picked up the pistols dropped by Bartrain and Harron. "Take these. When the sub comes up, we'll try to run alongside. I'll go aboard her—keep her from submerging if I can. You stand off, don't let them come up the deck hatches. I'll watch the conning tower."

She nodded quickly, looked toward Senator Sheridan. "Will you be ready to take the wheel?"

The senator smiled. "I never expected to have a share in the fighting. I will do what I can."

Thus, for a long five minutes, they ran on

down the bay; and Carl, the binoculars at his eyes, watched steadily. And so, at last, saw what he sought.

A thing like a black broomstick, protruding above the water. He turned the *Margot* toward it.

A gray, steel hump broke the water. The submarine. Carl twirled the wheel, whirled it again.

"Now!" he said.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SUBMARINE.

The submarine was rising to the surface. The gray hump of her conning tower followed the telescoping periscope into the air; the water slid away, bubbled and boiled. The long, knifelike deck shouldered its way into the open, the water sluicing off to either side.

Carl's maneuver had brought the *Margot* alongside, so close to the submarine that her white planking was within inches of the gray steel. He moved the commutator lever, so that the *Margot* slowed and just kept pace with the slowing U-boat. Then, as the senator took the wheel, and Elsa poised herself amidships, a pistol in either hand, Carl leaped aft, threw open the cabinet that held the tools with which he was accumtomed to tinker the engine, chose a heavy, flat, steel monkey wrench, and with this in his right hand and a pistol in his left, he jumped from the *Margot's* rail toward the U-boat.

His feet struck the edge of her deck, he threw himself forward and got a footing, and leaped for the conning tower. Even as he did so, from the tail of his eye he saw the *Margot* sheer off a little, then hold position, Elsa watchful and ready.

Carl caught the ladder that led up to the top of the conning tower. As his face came above the level, the conning-tower hatch with its powerful spring snapped open. Carl waited. A man's cap, a man's face came into sight as the German commander started to climb to the deck.

Carl thrust the wrench with all his strength into the man's face, and the German exclaimed hoarsely, and fell back out of sight. Carl crawled up till he lay flat atop the conning tower, cramped in the narrow space; and he held the wrench half in and half out of the open hatch so that the hatch cover could not be sprung shut.

Then he began to fire, slowly, at random, down into the open hatch. He fired at angles, without seeking to aim, and heard the bullets crash and ricochet in the narrow quarters below him. Heard also shouts and curses, and a scrambling of feet. Fired again and again, not too swiftly.

And so heard, after a moment, the sound he had been awaiting. The clang of the lower hatch.

At which he grinned, thrust his feet through the upper hatch, and dropped down into the conning tower of the submarine.

Carl's object was simple; to prevent the submarine's submerging until Harve Jones' schooner could run down and hold the U-boat at its mercy. To this end, he had prevented their closing the upper hatch. He knew the answer they must make, when they realized their plans had gone wrong. They would close the lower hatch, sealing the interior of the submarine, and then seek to submerge and drive him off. When his bullets cleared the conning tower, and he slid down in, his eyes flashed around at the intruments and dials and levers and buttons of the navigating apparatus that lined the walls about him.

He was careful to stand solidly on the hatch in the floor. Not that his weight would prevent their opening it if they wished to do so; but if they chose to try, he must detect their efforts. He would be warned and would have time to act.

There would be navigating apparatus in the body of the boat below him; he knew that. But he also counted upon finding in the conning tower the levers that operated the pumps. His first glance confirmed this; he reached for the lever, set the pumps going. The Germans within the sub must stop them, must fill the tanks before they could submerge. It would be a matter of minutes for them to cut off his controls. Those few minutes should suffice to allow Harve Jones to come down to the scene.

He heard shouted commands below him, and then a sudden ripping fusillade of shots outside. Elsa? Anxiety for her drew him up through the conning-tower hatch. He had done, in any case, all that he could do below. As he lifted his head above the top of the tower, the last shot cracked; no more followed. Elsa saw him and called pleasantly to him:

"They're all right. I can hold them."

He asked: "Did they try to come up?"

"Yes. Both deck hatches. Fore and aft."

"You must have been busy."

"They didn't keep up the try, when my shots struck the hatch covers."

"You're a brick," he told her.

The schooner was coming like the wind, now; and her blunt bows shouldered the water as the high-powered engines drove her on. Elsa saw, pointed:

"See," she said. "How speedy she is!"

Carl nodded. "Government boat," he explained. "She's more or less in disguise, to keep an eye on things up here. But she has speed when she needs it, and a gun, which we need."

"They're just fishermen," she protested, puzzled.

"Wolves in sheep's clothing," he laughed. "Seth and Tom are old navy men."

She cried: "I remember. You spoke to them this morning. Told them to be near, this afternoon. I knew you flooded the carburetor on purpose!"

He grinned. "Yes."

"Then you knew what was going to happen?" she asked, her eyes troubled.

He shook his head. "No. Suspected. Guessed."

"And let it happen? Took such a chance——"

"Took no great chance," he told her. "I was ready; and the two yonder"—he pointed toward the schooner—"they were on hand if I needed them."

She cried: "Look out!" Her pistol snapped. He turned and saw three or four men in greasy dungarees tumbling out of the stern hatch, rushing him, their pistols blazing. One fell to her shot. His own weapons roared. Two more went down; the fourth raised his hands hopelessly.

And at the same time, Carl heard the hum of machinery in the hull below him; the submarine slid forward, she settled faintly under his feet. The deck hatch clanged shut.

He groaned. Sixty seconds would see them under, safe, secure. But one thing to do. Yonder on the schooner were Seth and Tom, and the gun, ready in the bow. He waved a hand to them, a curt, decisive signal.

The gun cracked. There was a roar. Something struck the submarine, forward, a staggering blow. Flame flared there. A screaming bit of metal whirled past Carl's head. He slid off the conning tower, behind it. He ran back along the deck. The *Margot* sheered in toward him. He cried:

"Off. I can swim."

But Elsa, at the wheel, eyes shining, lips set, shook her head. "No. Come aboard," she bade him, and brought the *Margot* neatly in, so near that the motor boat scraped the tapering stern of the submarine. Carl leaped, got a hand hold on the *Margot's* rail, swung aboard her.

"You should have sheered off," he said hotly.

Elsa laughed a little, happily. "And—leave you?" she asked.

Senator Sheridan said quietly: "Look, my friends."

The *Margot* had driven astern of the submarine; the schooner swept down on the U-boat, that quick little gun pounding. At the senator's word, the two young people turned.

They saw, at first, only seething water. "She got under!" Elsa cried.

Sheridan shook his head. "She'll come up," he said. "She's hit."

At first, it seemed that he was wrong. They waited, second on second, and nothing came. Then, abruptly, the water broke. A lean, gray bow shot upward, slantingly, high in the air, then toppled over on its side, and the whole dark bulk broke clear and rolled, weltering in oil as a stricken whale welters in its blood. As it rolled, they saw the great hole in its side.

An instant it lay thus, tumbling.

Then, very slowly and serenely, it settled lower in the water, and the little waves lapped up and up its sides, and so met at last across the rolling thing, and drew it gently down.

CHAPTER XVI.

TANGLED ENDS.

The *Margot* and Harve Jones' schooner cruised back and forth through the oily patch that floated there for half an hour, but no man came up alive from the gray bulk below. Of those who had been in her, only two survived. One of these was the man who had surrendered on the deck; the other was one who had fallen, with a bullet through his shoulder. The one had dived, the other had tumbled into the water at the first shell, and they were picked up, drenched and thankful, and taken aboard the schooner.

Seth hailed Carl as he drew alongside. "Well, that's done," he said. "All well with you?"

"Yes, all well."

"What happened?" Seth looked curiously at Elsa, at Senator Sheridan. "What were they trying to do?"

Carl told him, briefly. "They planned to kidnap the senator, make it appear that he was a German agent. They've planted a letter, back in his room on the island. Seized him, aboard the *Margot*. Ran down here to the rendezvous. And the submarine heard our engines, and came up to take delivery."

Seth spat over the side. "She got her money's worth," he said. "We'll buoy her, and raise her. Water's not deep here. Like to see what she looks like inside."

"You did well," Carl told him.

"Good sport," Seth agreed. "Beats hauling a weir with the old man, here."

It was Senator Sheridan who reminded Carl that there were men adrift up the bay. The *Margot* bade the schooner good-by, and ran that way. They had heard, now and then, during the conflict, the screams of the woman prisoned in the cabin; and Carl opened the sliding door and spoke to her quietly.

"You will not be hurt," he said. "It is all over."

She looked at him with wide eyes, and sat as still as death. Elsa passed Carl and went into the cabin. "I'll stay with her," she said. "Close the door. Find father." Her face was white; her eyes were deadly sober.

They picked up, first, the man Hawes; and Carl bound him, hand and foot, against another attack. A little beyond, they saw Bartrain still floating securely, and lifted him aboard. The amiable man was broken; he seemed to have shrunk within his sopping garments. He sat down, aft, and would not meet their eyes. The senator crossed and sat beside him and spoke pleasantly.

"Come, Paul," he said. "This was madness. Nothing more. Take hold of yourself, man."

Carl was searching the waters for Harron. He saw nothing of the man who had chosen to swim; and he asked Bartrain:

"What became of Harron, sir?"

Paul Bartrain lifted weary eyes. "He was a soldier," he said. "He bade me good-by, and sank—with mouth wide to welcome—death." Carl caught his breath; the senator stiffened. "I wished to do as he did," said Paul Bartrain. "But—I am not a brave man."

Sheridan shook his head. "There are times when it is cowardly to die," he said. "Come, Carl. Run us to Mr. Bartrain's home."

They began to meet, then, the swarm of craft which had put out from the islands at sight of the swift drama enacted upon the bay. Questions showered upon them, but Carl answered none. He sped the *Margot* on her way, left the others floundering behind. As he drew in to Bartrain's landing, the fast little submarine patrol swept in beside him; and a little later, across from the island came the man who had been Sheridan's host the night before. A secret-service man was with him. They had found the letter the conspirators had left in Sheridan's room, thrust under a blotter where it might seem to have been forgotten; and they had arrested the serving maid who placed it there.

Sheridan smiled wearily when they gave him the letter.

"The drama was well planned," he said. "I owe you thanks, Seibert."

The ensign in command of the submarine patrol spoke to his men. Two sailors ranged themselves at Bartrain's sides.

The senator and Carl Seibert stayed at Bartrain's home through the next two days, till Bartrain and his wife were taken away for internment. Elsa went dry-eyed through those two days; but when, at the end, she watched her father and mother go, the tears broke, and she flung herself in the arms of Randolph Sheridan. He comforted her like a father. She was to go home with him, until other arrangements could be made.

That evening, upon the broad verandas, Sheridan and Elsa and Carl talked of what had passed; and the senator and Elsa drew from Carl his story of it all.

"You weren't a real burglar, at all?" Elsa asked.

Carl shook his head. "We had hints there was something wrong, here," he explained. "I was assigned to the business. To get into the house, while the others, on the schooner, watched from their angle. So I "

"Did you have to break in?"

"I wanted them to make use of me," he said. "I wished to put myself in their

power. I intended to be detected in Mr. Bartrain's room. And my map was wrong and—— I woke you——"

"But how could you be sure he would want you?"

"We had taken away the other man—who used to run your boats. When he questioned me, I let him see I was pro-German, and I told him I could run a motor. If he had need of me, we felt, he would give me the place. Would use my crime to keep a hold upon me."

"You couldn't be sure."

"It was a chance. It worked."

She was thoughtful and silent for a space. "I—wish you had told me," she said softly, at last. "I could have made father give it up. I could have stopped it——"

Sheridan looked across at Carl, and Carl read a message in the older man's eyes. He bade them good night.

They left the next day. At the landing, Sheridan and Elsa bade Carl good-by. He was to stay another day. It had been arranged that the true story should be hidden. The papers were told that the Bartrains were interned; no more. The submarine sinking was kept secret. For the rest, Elsa would stay with the senator.

"For Paul Bartrain is too old a friend to lose," Sheridan said, as he stood with Elsa and Carl. "He and I will come together again, some day. Old men are not for grudges. Meanwhile, Elsa is mine."

Their motor boat touched the landing. The senator helped Elsa in. "We shall be at my home on Long Island," he told Carl. "Do you ever come down that way?"

"I go to Washington next week," Carl said.

Sheridan looked down at Elsa; and he asked, smiling a little: "Shall I ask this young man to come and see us then?"

Elsa's eyes met Carl's for an instant; then hers drooped. "Please—if you will—I wish you would," she said.

No Flowers, Please

By Berton Braley

I AIN'T goin' forth to die,
Don't you buy no wreath for me,
That's no way to treat a guy
Who is sailin' oversea.
What I plan to do is fight,
Do my share to lick the Hun,
Finish up the business right,
An' come back when it is done.

I ain't goin' forth to die
When I reach the fields of France;
Some of us will get it, I
Have to take a sportin' chance.
Some will get the final crack,
Most of us will worry through,
And my chance of comin' back
Looks as good as others do.

I ain't goin' forth to die,
Don't you get that in your head,
So there ain't no use to cry
Till you're sure that I am dead.
And if in some bloody drive
I get mine among the throng,
You can smile and know that I've
Taken several Huns along.

So forget this morbid stuff,
It's a gamble, that is all,
And the chance is fair enough
That I won't be one to fall.
Think of me as on the job
Teachin' Fritz his lesson. Why,
There's no reason you should sob,
I ain't goin' forth to die!

One Hundred and One Broadway

By William Hamilton Osborne
Author of "Let's Get Used to 'Em," Etc.

For real-estate men this tale will be a confirmation of some of the dark and devious twists and corners of their business which are ever ready to entrap them. For the average reader the doings recorded will be good comedy

AT one-thirty on the afternoon of a day late in the month of March, of the year 1917, Billings, the bespectacled junior partner of the law firm of Ryan, Ryerson & Billings, swung into the impressive offices of the Gotham Title Company in New York and stepped up to the information desk.

"The O'Reilly title—on at two o'clock—who's got it?" he demanded.

Behind him stalked leisurely his client—a huge hulk of an individual, very tall, very broad of shoulder, very huge of girth, with a ruddy countenance surmounted by a thick thatch of very snow-white hair. As he entered the title company's offices he swept off his big black hat and mopped his brow—a proceeding, by the way, which engaged his attention every three minutes of his time, indoors as well as out, in warm or wintry weather. This mountain of a man was no stranger here. With his pink face, and the intermittently exposed white crest adorning it, he was a marked figure on Broadway, as well known to officegoers as was Trinity itself.

"Now, now," he soothed, quite unconsciously elbowing the dignified and slender Billings to one side, "don't ask foolish questions—no use to look up O'Reilly on the list. It'll be Dick Norton, now. I just can tell you that."

The girl at the information desk placed an eager little hand in the big man's outstretched paw. "Oh," she cried, nodding to Billings, "it's Mr. Pat O'Reilly's title. His titles always go to Mr. Norton—third closing office to the right."

Billings pushed on toward the third closing office to the right, and Mr. Pat O'Reilly of the Pat O'Reilly titles, carried on, still mopping his brow, bowing magnificently to the right and left, quite regardless as to whether anybody met his eye or returned his salutation. Within the third office to the right, under the strong rays of a desk lamp, at a desk piled high with work, sat Norton, one of the most expert title closers in the Gotham plant. He was a well-looking, well-set-up, well-dressed young chap of something over thirty, but his face was flushed with utter weariness, and his eyes were very, very tired.

"Greetings, greetings!" exclaimed Norton quite mechanically, as Billings stepped into the room. He peered with blinking eyes out into the comparative darkness of his small office. Then he recognized his man—in the course of time a title-closing man gets to know every active lawyer in New York. "Oh, Mr. Billings!" he added, with a sort of irritable welcome in his voice.

"The O'Reilly title," remarked Billings, fetching up at the desk, "it's on at two o'clock."

At this juncture Pat O'Reilly lumbered leisurely into the room, closed the door behind him, and carefully locked it. Then, with three very rare cigars clutched bristling in his hand, he tiptoed up to Norton's desk.

"The top of the morning to you, Richard Norton," he exclaimed, and thereupon distributed the smokes.

Norton, his lips parting in a fine, wide, vivid smile, took the cigar O'Reilly handed him, lit it, and sank back in his swivel chair with a sigh of relief. "Ah," he exclaimed, "it's a Pat O'Reilly title. That's different, Mr. Billings. Mr. Pat O'Reilly is our star boarder here. If Mr. Pat O'Reilly's title is on at two o'clock, why it's on at two o'clock that's all. We'll close anything for Mr. Pat O'Reilly, at two o'clock or any other time."

Billings held up his hand and shook his head. "Any title but this title," he interposed, "that's why we came around so far

ahead of time. This is a title that we never want to close."

"Buying or selling?" queried Norton.

"Buying," said Billings.

"Where's the property?" queried Norton, mildly curious, "uptown or down?"

"Downtown," responded Billings.

Norton glanced at O'Reilly with reproach in his eyes. "There's *nothing* doing down in this part of town—not now. Downtown is dead. Any tyro ought to know that much. What is it, where is it—what kind of junk have you bought, O'Reilly?"

Billings answered for him. "Office building—one of the old school—One Hundred and One Broadway."

The light of understanding flashed in Norton's eyes. He grinned. "One Hundred and One Broadway," he mused, "why, that's the Hohenzollern Building."

"Too true," said Pat O'Reilly.

"The kaiser used to own that building," went on Norton, "does he own it yet?"

Billings nodded. "It's one of the last of his holdings in New York."

Norton's grin widened. "Now," he said, "I can understand why Mr. Pat O'Reilly's stung—only I hate to see him nipped by the hooded cobra of Berlin."

"Not stung yet," said O'Reilly, "got this at half price—this gink must've wanted money pretty bad. The buy is a bargain—I'll tell you about that."

Norton waved the discussion to one side. "Mr. Billings," he said, "your firm is fortunate in securing Mr. Pat O'Reilly for a client. He'll keep you on your toes—he'll make life quite well worth living for you. He'll buy anything in America that royalty has got to sell. Let me tell you how the Gotham Title Company got acquainted with Mr. Pat O'Reilly—though that was well before my time. When this title company was formed, it bought an office building—an old office building situated upon this present site. It purchased the property from a widowed lady of international prominence—Mrs. Victoria Wettin, wasn't it, O'Reilly—or Mrs. Victoria Guelph?"

"It was both," nodded O'Reilly, his eyes twinkling with the recollection.

"Wettin—Guelph," mused Billings, "I never heard of her."

"Well," smiled Norton, "just at that time she was busily engaged—she was the Empress of India, and the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, don't you know."

Billings blushed deeply. He blinked sheepishly behind his glasses. "Yes, yes, go on," he exclaimed hastily.

"The Gotham Title Company," proceeded Norton, "then in its infancy, paid the queen a handsome price and gave her a big purchase-money mortgage. When the mortgage became due we couldn't pay it—and we couldn't borrow from anybody else, because there'd been a terrific slump in values—and her majesty foreclosed——"

"They'd bit off just about twice what they could chew, these lads," interposed O'Reilly.

"Then," went on Norton, "along came Pat O'Reilly. He bought the building from us—saved the day—made us his tenants. Three years later he sold—or rather resold our property to us——"

"At about three prices, if I recollect," dreamily mused O'Reilly.

"At three prices," repeated Norton, "and we've lived happily ever after. Mr. Billings," continued Norton, "just one year before the corner of Broadway and Forty-second Street became the busiest corner in the world, the King of Spain sold his Forty-fourth Street holdings, almost for a song—to Mr. Pat O'Reilly. Later Mr. Pat O'Reilly made two millions on the deal. And now he's taken on the German emperor—only this time he's riding for a fall."

"Not a bit of it," returned O'Reilly, "this is another building that I've bought up for a song. That lad had to sell—and sell quick. He wanted money bad, and New York's too hot to hold him. The name Hohenzollern will damn anything—the building's two-thirds vacant, and it's a rat trap and a fire trap in the bargain. And there's no market. But I bought it for a million and a trifle over. It's the best bargain of the lot. But I don't want it, Richard Norton. Yesterday opportunity slapped me in the face hard—I got the chance to buy a New Jersey powder plant, lock, stock and barrel, for twice the money that I'm paying William—I can make ten millions on it, and send stuff over to explode his insides out to boot. But I can't swing this deal and the other one. I want to duck this Hundred and One Broadway—I don't want to close the deal."

"I get you," nodded Norton. "Who's on the other side?"

"Lachenauer & Von Lembeck," answered Billings.

"Rum customers," mused Norton.

Billings nodded. "They expect the title to go through to-day."

"What did you tell 'em?" queried Norton.

"That we're ready if they are."

"Good work!" responded Norton. "Now wait until we send for the papers and see what's what."

Before the papers were sent in Lachenauer made his advent. He was a pudgy gentleman who bristled with an air of unusual importance. Why not? For in this particular instance he was the legal, and in fact, the personal representative of a sovereign who had set out to wreck the universe, and who, at that particular moment, had gone far in the accomplishment of his purpose. Lachenauer smiled greasily upon all present. O'Reilly made no move to hand him a cigar, so he accepted one from Norton. Then Lachenauer drew his papers from his inside pocket and laid them before Norton.

"There, gentlemen," he remarked, "is a comprehensive power of attorney duly executed by his majesty——"

"His majesty," snorted O'Reilly. "Who the devil is his majesty?"

Lachenauer spread his hands deprecatingly and smiled. He winked at Norton with a cowlike grimace.

"Of course—to an Englishman——" he began.

O'Reilly started to his feet. "I'm no Englishman, you blundering blackguard!" he exclaimed.

Norton held up his hand for silence. "This power of attorney," he remarked, "seems to be all right. Now where's the deed from you, Mr. Lachenauer, the donee of the power, to Mr. Pat O'Reilly?"

Lachenauer shoved it in front of Norton, who examined it. That, too, seemed to be all right, and Norton said so.

"I'm ready, then," said Lachenauer.

"I'm not," smiled Norton suavely, lighting another cigar, "not until I get the report on this title—and here it comes."

Norton took it and looked it over. The two lawyers and O'Reilly watched him in silence as he scanned it. Finally he nodded with apparent satisfaction.

"Now, counselor," he said to Lachenauer, "you've got a clean bill of health, except that——"

"Except what?" queried Lachenauer.

"Except," went on Norton, "that there are about sixty-one different and distinct violations placed on this building by the health, fire and building departments of the city of New York. Before you can make title you've got to get them off."

Lachenauer held out his hands appealingly to O'Reilly. "All you got to do, Mr. O'Reilly, is to hold back something from the purchase price—enough, more than enough, to cover all the cost of fixing up these violations—hold back twenty-five—fifty thousand, if you say so. But let us close to-day."

O'Reilly looked at Billings. Billings looked at Norton, shrugging his shoulders as he did so.

"It's up to you, Mr. Norton," said Billings. "All we're looking for is your title policy that the title is all clear—if you want to take a chance, we'll do anything you say."

Norton shook his head. "The title isn't clear. And the lien of these city violations isn't like the lien of a mortgage. You can't just hold out fifteen or twenty thousand dollars to pay them off. Before these men get through their work the whole building may be condemned—who knows? Until that work is done, and the city tells us so, you can't make title, counselor."

Lachenauer knew it well enough. But again he turned to O'Reilly. "Right now, Mr. O'Reilly," he said, "I will knock off twenty-five thousand dollars from the purchase price. You can afford to take that money and see to it that the work is done. Besides, you are entitled to possession under your contract on April first—whether the title closes then or not, you have the right to go in. You can take this twenty-five thousand that I knock off, and see to it that the work is speeded up."

O'Reilly shook his head. His negative was emphatic and unmistakable.

"One minute, Mr. O'Reilly," went on Lachenauer. "Right now I will knock fifty thousand dollars off the purchase price, just so we can close to-day."

Still O'Reilly shook his head. "I want clear title," he returned.

Norton started to note an adjournment on the papers. "How long," he queried of Lachenauer, "will it take that army of men to clean up down there?"

"One week at the most," returned Lachenauer uneasily.

"Three weeks at the least," exclaimed O'Reilly.

"One week—not more," repeated Lachenauer.

Norton nodded. "We'll split the difference, gentlemen. We'll set the closing of this title two weeks from to-day. That goes."

When Lachenauer had left, Norton glanced quizzically at O'Reilly and his counsel.

"Gentlemen," said Norton, "that man Lachenauer has got me worried. He's terribly insistent for the closing of this title. This adjournment knocks him in a heap—he's frightened, badly frightened——"

"The kaiser wants the money and wants it p. d. q," returned O'Reilly.

Norton shook his head. "There's something more than that—this man Lachenauer knows something about this title that we don't know, and he's afraid we'll find it out. I'm leery of him, Mr. Billings. I am, indeed."

"The power of attorney may be forged," remarked O'Reilly.

"The kaiser may be dead," said Billings.

"No," returned Norton, "a deal like that would be too raw, even for Lachenauer. He knows that our experts will go over his papers with a fine-tooth comb—he knows we'll have the facts. It's something else. There's something he's afraid is going to happen, and happen pretty quick. And we don't know what it is. He's got some knowledge that we haven't got. We're groping in the dark."

O'Reilly laughed. "Well, boys," he said, "we've got some knowledge that he hasn't got. He don't know that I'm going to duck this deal. Meantime," he added, "I'm confronted by a condition and not a theory. April first is about three days from now. The question is, shall I take possession, then?"

O'Reilly looked at Norton, but Norton waved the query aside. "Mr. Billings is your counsel," he returned.

Billings pursed his lips and hummed and hawed. "Let us have *your* view, Mr. Norton," he suggested.

"You're too good a bluffer, Mr. O'Reilly," said Norton, "to weaken at this point. I say to carry your bluff through to the breaking point. I say, go in on April first."

"And in I go!" exclaimed O'Reilly. "And now, last but not least, gentlemen, the most important thing of all. I want somebody to take this contract off my hands. The Hohenzollern Building is a bargain—it's worth double what I've bound myself to pay. All that it needs is holding for a year or so until things settle down. Then you can clean up—it'll be a killing. In all your wide acquaintance you two gentlemen ought to know somebody that'll take this contract off my hands."

"In all *your* wide acquaintance," smiled Norton, "don't *you* know somebody that'll take the contract off your hands?"

But O'Reilly didn't and Billings didn't, either—that was clear.

"No more do I," said Norton, "but I'll see what I can do."

At half past eight that evening Norton was seated at an expensive antique little center table in a chic little three-room apartment in the Eighties. His black walrus-hide portfolio rested on the floor against the leg of the Chippendale chair upon which he sat. Before him on the table was spread a multitude of papers. He was working overtime. He was still tired. The lines of weariness had deepened in his rather handsome face. His fine eyes were bloodshot with overwork. But he was immaculate and neat, spruced up and brushed up to the limit. Norton didn't live in this apartment, it wasn't his. And yet he seemed thoroughly at home. He worked swiftly, silently.

And as he worked, suddenly a small, white hand and a bare, well-rounded arm crept across the center table. The hand caught his hand in a firm, warm grip. Norton returned the grasp, and glanced across the table into a woman's eyes. They were fine eyes, too—clear and honest eyes—appealing, wistful eyes. And as they looked into the eyes of Richard Norton, the appeal and wistfulness deepened in them—they became anxious, troubled eyes. She was a woman, not a girl—a pretty woman, with twenty-eight years to her credit. Like Norton, she possessed the trick of always being trim and neat, a habit that seemed professional with both. Her name was Kate Rivers and she was confidential stenographer to a private banker on Exchange Place downtown.

"Richard," she exclaimed, with something insistent in her voice, and as she spoke she placed another white, warm hand over his. "Richard Norton."

"Kitty Rivers," responded Norton, holding both her hands in his.

"Richard," she went on, "Richard, please put up your work. Please—I want to talk to you."

There was something in her tone that set him on his guard. He glanced at her a bit wonderingly, a bit sharply, even.

The girl's glance met his very squarely. "Dick," she said, her voice a bit tremulous with what she had to say, "do you know that you are gradually losing everything that has attracted me to you?"

He glanced at her dully. He didn't quite comprehend. "I—don't get you!" he exclaimed.

"Oh," she said reassuringly, "you haven't lost it, yet; but you're losing it. You're not the same man, Dick, that I engaged myself to. You're not at all the man that I fell head over heels in love with two years ago and more." She smiled faintly, her lips trembled more than ever, but her wistful eyes were steady.

"I don't get you, yet," he murmured, but his voice sounded somehow strangled. She had spoken plain English and her words were eating in.

The girl bit her lips in her agitation. "I thought it would give you a jolt, Dick, and it has, hasn't it? I want it to. Dick, the thing that's changed you—that's changing you—is this grinding work. It isn't meant for a man like you. For others, yes, but not for you. There are plenty of men that can go like machinery—that want to be machines—that prefer it. But not you. You're too big, somehow."

Norton laughed, but his laugh was lifeless, mirthless. "Too big for work?" he echoed. "You mean I'm too small a man for work. No man's too big for grinding work. Only I'm not made of the right kind of stuff—work hits me harder than it does the next man. I've got a natural tendency to laziness that I can't overcome—that's the thing that grinds——"

She shook her head. "The thing that grinds you—the thing that's taking all the Richard Norton out of you that God put into you, Dickie, is just this: you were born to have your hand on the throttle, to start the wheels moving, to tell other people what to do. Instead of that, you're just a cog in the machine. You can't stand that, Dickie—you're not built for it."

"There's plenty of room at the top," conceded Norton. "I suppose I ought to be up there somewhere. But I'm not—I'm not. Can't you understand that I'm a twenty-five-hundred-dollar-a-year man. I told you that when I—when we fell in love—I've always told you that, Kitty. Just a twenty-five-hundred-dollar-a-year man. That's the Norton that you sort of tied up to, Kitty. I'm myself—I'm not somebody else, you understand."

"It's because you're yourself—because you're an individual and not a type, Dick, that you can't go on as you're going. I'm a good judge, Dickie. Yes, I am. I see thousands of men every year—and too often I see the born leaders herding with the crowd, I'm a good judge. Listen, Dickie, for twenty years I lived with a man, just like you——"

"Lived with a man—are you crazy?" cried Norton.

"Listen," cried the girl, "my father was a square man fitted into a round hole, Dickie. He was born to go his own gait—and all his life he was shackled—tied hand and foot—never his own master. Listen. My father's immediate superior—the man to whom my father was accountable was a man named Bently. For the last fifteen years of my father's life, my mother and I heard nothing, subsisted on nothing, talked nothing, thought nothing—save the mean things that Bob Bently did to father. That was our life—the new thing in our existence was the new mean thing that Bob Bently had done to father during the day, or had done the day before, or was concocting for the morrow. That was my father's whole existence. After a while—too late—we began to understand. It wasn't Bently—there weren't meannesses. My father didn't belong—he wasn't born to take somebody else's bidding, and it broke him——"

"Somebody's got to take orders," protested Norton.

"Not," she returned, "not my father—and not you. I want you to get out of it, Dickie. I want you to drop it, before it takes out of you something that can never be put back."

"Kate," cried Norton sharply, "now, listen to me. You're not crazy. You're a business woman. You have a job—it took you a long while to get it—you've got a good one. You know what jobs are, how hard it is to hold them down. I can hold mine—I can do more. In the course of time I'll forge ahead—year by year I'm

creeping up. Some day, I'll be somewhere near the top."

She shook her head. "You'll break first, Dickie. I know. I want you to stop before it's too late."

"Now look," he returned, "you say, stop! All right. Suppose I do just what you say—suppose I stop? What then? I'm a lawyer. Shall I spend my next five years working up to a point where I can pay expenses? I stop. What do I do? Where do I look? What next?"

The insistence in her voice only deepened. "I don't know—now. But after a month's rest, you'll know, Dick. You're that kind of a man. Get yourself back into yourself, and you'll soon answer my question and your own."

"After a month's rest," he said, "I'll crawl back to the Gotham and ask for a place in the machine. I know."

The girl took another tack. "Dick," she cried, "do you think, then, that all this is fair to me? We've been engaged now for two whole years."

"No, by gosh!" he returned gloomily. "It isn't fair to you! You've said something. And I've told you so, time and time again. You can marry any man you want to, Kitty—there's no man in New York too good or too big for you. You were cut out for a far better man than I am——"

"Richard," she cried petulantly, "oh, how I hate to hear you talk like that."

"Well, I've got to keep on talking," said Norton doggedly. "There's your own boss—he's the kind of a man you want me to be. And he's a bachelor. And I've seen him look at you, damn him, as though he could eat you up. They're paying him twenty thousand a year—you told me so. He's your kind. Take him! You're entitled to a happy life with the right kind of a man. You've got every woman's idea—and maybe it's the right idea—that every man who's any kind of a man makes ten thousand a year. That's what every woman thinks."

"Stop!" cried Kitty Rivers, an angry flush upon her face. "Richard, will you stop talking about money. Can't you think of anything but money? What has money got to do with life?"

"A whole lot—from what you've just said to me," he retorted. He was irritable. He was sore. His nerves were at the breaking point.

"Listen," she commanded, "tell me just one thing, Dick. Why didn't you marry me two years ago—why not? Just tell me that?"

Norton cast his eyes about the expensively furnished little room. "Of course, I'll tell you that," he answered, "because I was making two thousand a year and you were making fifteen hundred—and living like a princess. Now, I'm making twenty-five, and you've climbed to seventeen. Who am I to cut short all the comforts you're entitled to? And if I'd married you then, I suppose by now I'd have been your father all over again."

"Not a bit of it!" exclaimed the girl.

Norton laughed. He tried to be good-natured, but he was still sore. "Then I suppose," he went on, his smile fading, "in place of the Gotham being my boss, my wife would have taken charge of me. You would have made a ten-thousand-dollar-a-year man out of me—or tried to."

"I would have seen to it that you were your own boss," she returned.

"You would have forced the issue," he cried. "You would have compelled—compelled me to be my own boss! Held the slave driver's lash over me—to make me my own boss!"

He was worse than grouchy. If his work had taken something out of him, it had put something in him that didn't belong—a fine edge upon his temper. But he was grouchy not at the girl, but at himself. He was not himself, that was the fact of the matter. The girl had been right—his utter weariness, his muddled brain, his shattered nerves had set him all on edge. He went the limit and said what he had to say.

"How I broke my husband!" he exclaimed. "Compelling him, at the point of the bayonet, to be his own free boss."

The girl knew where the trouble lay, and she gloated in the knowledge. She well knew that a dull fear had settled around his heart—a fear that she was slipping from his grasp.

"Listen, Dickie," she went on in soothing tones, "until I tell you all about the Bradlos."

"What have they got to do with it?" he queried. "The Bradlos—who the devil are the Bradlos?"

"Nobody," she responded, "everybody. They're the Bradlos—a young couple that blew into our office this morning—a breezy

young couple from the West. People with shining eyes—that's what they were, Dickie—Bradlo and wife, from anywhere, bound for anywhere. Bound for everywhere—together, Dickie, always together. They blew into our office, Trenholm's and mine. They were broke. They'd come out of the West to buck Wall Street. They had bucked it, and it bit them. But there they were, with shining eyes, to show Trenholm that his bookkeeper's figures had gone wrong and that Trenholm still owed them forty-nine dollars. Just now they wanted that money, needed it, had to have it. And they stuck to Trenholm until he saw that they were right and we were wrong.

"And you should have heard young Bradlo! He's about your age, Dickie, and Trenholm is fifty if he's a day. 'Don't look at me like that, young feller,' said Bradlo to my boss. 'Young feller, I've lost more money than you ever dreamed of making. And what's more, I'm straight. I can look any damn man in the face and tell him to go plumb to hell.' And he had, Dickie, he had made more money than Trenholm had ever dreamed of making. His young wife sat there by my desk and told me all about it. They'd made three fortunes and lost 'em. But her eyes were shining, Dickie. Life was their big adventure, and they were taking it, hand in hand. Everything was an adventure to that girl—being in our big offices, talking to me—all adventure, Dickie. Well, they breezed out of our offices with their forty-nine dollars. 'What's money,' the girl said to me, 'what's money—when you've got a man like that?' Meaning Bradlo. And where do you think they are, Dickie? Down on Greenwich Street, keeping body and soul together—they've got a dirty job taking care of a dirty tenement house—working, side by side. And they don't like it—it's smelly—it's dirty—they want the open, only they haven't the money to get back. 'Not like Arizona, miss,' the girl told me. 'Have you ever slept on the Arizona desert, miss? That's life. Oh, the Arizona nights, with Bradlo—life, miss—that's what it is.'"

Kitty Rivers crept around to Norton's side of the mahogany table, and knelt by him, clinging to him tremulously, appealingly, her face buried against his shoulder.

"Listen, Dickie," she whispered, "I don't want anything in the whole world but just you. But I want to live with you, Dick—I want to go with you. I don't care how we live or where. I'll live in a hovel—I'll live in a tent. But I want us both to live with shining eyes, Dick—with shining eyes."

The next morning in his office Norton took four savings-bank books from his pocket, and took note of the balance in each one. The total came to over three thousand dollars. Each book bore the name of Kate Rivers on its cover. From another pocket Norton abstracted three books of his own—they totaled something more than twenty-five hundred. He shook his head doubtfully.

"Shoe strings!" he exclaimed.

With the manner of a man about to plunge into a cold shower he gulped and held his breath, and then called up O'Reilly on the phone.

"Just at this minute, Mr. O'Reilly," he explained, "Mohammed can't get to the mountain——"

"Glory be," said O'Reilly, "just at this minute the mountain is just after starting to Mohammed. In two shakes of a lamb's tail, my boy, two shakes——"

In two shakes he was there. "Glory be," he cried, noting the light in Norton's eyes, "you've got a man to take that title off my hands?"

Norton shook his head. "I haven't got a man—I've got a woman," he returned.

"She's an angel in disguise," exclaimed O'Reilly, "and—can she raise the money, now?"

Norton blinked. "She's raising a good bit of it on bond and mortgage," he explained. He didn't think it necessary to go into detail. He didn't tell O'Reilly that he had assurances that she could raise it all on bond and mortgage. He and Kitty Rivers had worked like beavers toward that end.

"Ah," returned O'Reilly, "if I had the cash to spare, I'd lend it to her myself. This is a good buy, this property—it's worth double the money and maybe more. But I'm well out of it, my boy. There's another phase that's just occurred to me. Think of it—if I carried out this deal I'd be putting over a million good American dollars into this son of a gun's hands—putting it into his hands to fight good Christians with!"

"By gosh!" cried Norton. "You know I never thought of that. I've had my mind on this title, nothing else. I've just been thinking in a groove—always in a groove." He was plainly disturbed. "No," he mused,

"and if I were this woman, I wouldn't want to do it either."

"I dare say," said O'Reilly, "that the little lady wouldn't want to do it, if she thought about it, but so long as she doesn't think about it——"

"Yes," interposed Norton doubtfully. "After all, it's her affair."

"At any rate," went on O'Reilly, "this lets me out."

Norton hesitated for an instant, then came instantly to a decision.

"Now, Mr. O'Reilly," he went on, "what about terms? You're out the five thousand that you paid to Lachenauer."

O'Reilly waved his hand. "Forget it," he returned, "I'll hand it to the little lady as an Easter present. I don't want a cent of money—hand me your little assignment there, my boy—I'll do the rest."

Inside of three minutes O'Reilly was once more upon Broadway, mopping his brow, and bowing right and left to a wondering and appreciative populace.

At one o'clock Norton took Kitty Rivers out to lunch. When they were seated he handed her four bank books, together with the unused drafts she had drawn upon them.

"Done," he told her, laying before her O'Reilly's assignment of the contract.

"How much did it cost us, Dick?"

"Not a dollar," laughed Norton. "Your money is intact."

"And yours?"

"Mine also," said Norton.

"I've talked to Trenholm," said the girl. "He's positive he can get us the money that we need. He's sure of it, in fact."

"It's already spoken for," smiled Norton. "In fact, I've just arranged it with Liebnau & Metz, on Nassau Street."

"The German bankers?"

"Very much so," responded Norton. "They're soaking us unmercifully for the money; but then, that's to be expected now. Kitty," he went on, "do you remember my telling you about Lachenauer—his air of having something up his sleeve?"

She nodded. "He knew something that you didn't, I remember."

"Liebnau & Metz know something that I don't—they've got something up their sleeves. For some reason or other, this is a time for rapid moves."

"Dick," she cried enthusiastically, "you're swifter than all the rest of them together. It will make us rich."

"And that counts—making us rich?" queried Norton.

"What counts is the doing of it," she returned. "It counts, even if it cleans us out."

"It won't clean us out," said Norton, "unless something wholly unforeseen should happen——"

"It won't happen," returned the girl firmly, "I know it won't—it can't."

It did. That day the president went before Congress with his message. Four days later the United States was at a state of war with Germany. All bets were off. Liebnau & Metz immediately countermanded their offer to loan Norton the money that he wanted. All other available sources of supply turned a deaf ear to his insistent requests. Money intended to stay where it was until it knew just where it belonged. It was the one big bet—ready money—and those who had it couldn't let it go.

Norton faced Kitty in her kitchenette apartment in the Eighties. He laughed forlornly.

"Talk about swift moves," he remarked.

She nodded soberly. "Well," she said, "we've plunged—and lost. Lachenauer will want his pound of flesh——"

Norton groaned. "And he'll take it, not out of us, but out of O'Reilly. And I assured O'Reilly that I'd see to it personally that this thing went through. And Lachenauer knew this all the time, and Liebnau & Metz with their German money, they knew it all the time. And I, with my nose to the grindstone—running always in a groove—I didn't even read the signs of the times. Titles, that's all I've lived and breathed, just titles. Titles—nothing else." He stopped short. He stared at her wildly for an instant. Then he caught her by the arm. "By gosh," he cried breathlessly. "By gosh!"

The girl was alarmed. "Dick," she cried, "what's the matter with you—are you crazy—are you ill?"

"By gosh, no," he laughed. "I'm just beginning to climb out of the rut—I'm going over the top. I'm going to follow Pat O'Reilly's lead, Kitty, I'm going to bluff this thing out to the bitter end."

"When does the title close?" she queried.

"It doesn't," he laughed grimly, "but it's set to close about a week from now."

"After that," she cried forlornly, "the deluge. And I got you into this."

"I got *you* into it, you mean," he re-

torted. "But never mind—we'll bluff it out, I tell you, to the bitter end. By gosh!"

The Gotham Title Company had as its banking branch a trust company around the corner. Two days before the date set for the closing of the title Norton swung into the cashier's private office. He saw the cashier, Billy Lee.

"Billy," he said, as though the whole thing were a matter of form, "I'm giving you a couple of days' notice—that ought to be enough. One of the Gotham's clients wants to tender one million, one hundred thousand dollars. Can you get that much together—big bills—legal-tender money, all of it?"

"Surest thing you know," said Lee. "You tell me when and where."

Norton told him.

"All right," said the cashier, "you phone me when you're ready—I'll be there with the cash."

Two days later at two o'clock in the afternoon, Lachenauer and his partner Von Lembeck attended, true to form, at Norton's closing office.

"Gentlemen," said Norton, "this is Miss Rivers, sitting here. She has purchased from Mr. Pat O'Reilly all of his interest in the Hohenzollern contract——"

Lachenauer bowed. "She is, I take it, ready to close to-day?"

"*She* is," returned Norton significantly. Then he called up the trust company's cashier.

"Oh, hello, Billy!" he exclaimed. "Now, can you bring around Miss Rivers' money—say in quarter of an hour?"

"Surest thing you know," said Lee.

Norton seized his title papers. "Meantime, gentlemen," he said, "let me look over my closing sheet and see just where we stand. The violations, I take note, are all released."

"They are, thank God!" cried Lachenauer, wiping his forehead. "An army of men, and a fortune in money, Miss Rivers."

"Miss Rivers," said Norton, "your building, save for interior decoration, ought to be in pretty fair shape. You have your deed, gentlemen, and the power of attorney you produced before. Well and good. There's nothing else—except, oh, yes, just one thing, gentlemen—just one thing more."

"Himmel!" cried Lachenauer. "What one thing more?"

Norton looked at Miss Rivers, he looked at Lachenauer, he looked at Von Lembeck, he looked at the ceiling, he looked at the floor—he smiled.

"A mere detail," he said. "I'll need evidence that William Hohenzollern, the grantor, is a citizen of the United States of America."

"You'll need—what?" cried Lachenauer.

"You've got to show me that the kaiser is a citizen of the United States," repeated Norton, in his best offhand manner.

There was a deep silence. Lachenauer looked at Von Lembeck. Von Lembeck looked at Lachenauer.

"Himmel!" cried Lachenauer. "But this is foolish talk. The grantor is an alien—you've known that all along. Mr. O'Reilly, he knew that—the whole world knew it. Before this you've said nothing about this thing at all."

"Before this," returned Norton, "I've had no chance to say it. Two weeks ago we'd have taken your title. Now we're at a state of war with Germany——"

"But," spluttered Lachenauer, "this is private business between William Hohenzollern and this lady here."

"Your man Hohenzollern," returned Norton, "happens to be an enemy alien—and you know, better than I do, that an enemy alien can't hold title to real estate lying in this State. His title is no good. He hasn't got title. So he can't give us title. And there you are."

"This is preposterous, Mr. von Lembeck!" shouted Lachenauer to his partner. "Here, all was arranged—here, everybody was ready—no objections raised, and here, he springs this foolish thing upon us. An old dead-letter law. And just because we are at war he brings it up."

"Mr. Lachenauer," smiled Norton, "this foolish thing is a foolish thing that has been in your mind all along. Your imperial client concluded to close out his holdings before it was too late. He could use American money, but he couldn't use American property—not after the hour struck. And the hour might strike at any moment. And Messrs. Liebnau & Metz, with German money on the wrong side of the ocean, were quite ready and anxious to loan it to Miss Rivers here, an American purchaser, so long as the money could slide gracefully across the sea without involving them. Two weeks ago you knew that in a few days we would be at war. And you knew the consequence."

"Preposterous!" cried Lachenauer.

"At any rate," went on Norton, "this title company declines to pass this title as it is—no title company in New York will pass it. Get that. And the defect cannot be remedied until your man ceases to be an enemy alien—and even then I won't be sure about his status. What do you say, shall we adjourn this closing until the war is over?"

"Himmel, no!" roared Lachenauer. "We are here to close to-day. All this nonsense—we have had enough."

Norton smiled again. "You know, Mr. Lachenauer," he said, "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. Miss Rivers, under our advice, declines to take your title. There you are!"

Lachenauer's manner changed. "You look here, Mr. Norton. Do you mean it, all this nonsense? Do you tell me, in all seriousness, that you decline to pass this title?"

Miss Rivers answered him. "I want the property, Mr. Lachenauer, and I'll accept good title if you've got it. The title company says you haven't got it. What am I to do?"

Lachenauer glanced at Van Lembeck. That worthy nodded. "Very well, then," said Lachenauer. "Then we stand upon our rights. Mr. von Lembeck, you will witness this. Here! I tender you, Miss Rivers, this deed to this property—there it is. And I tender you this power of attorney signed by his majesty, upon which this deed is based—and there it is. So there! I tender both."

"And Miss Rivers," said Norton, "declines to take the title as it is. Therefore she declines the tender." He made a brief note of the proceedings on his closing sheet.

"Well, then," said Lachenauer, "the deal is off—we shall look to the original purchaser, Mr. O'Reilly, for heavy damages. Mr. O'Reilly is not here. I renew my tender to you as his representative, and you decline it. So we shall hold him. He shall suffer for it. Big damages shall this man O'Reilly pay."

Von Lembeck plucked his partner's sleeve and for a moment they held their heads together, whispering.

"Ah, yes," finally said Lachenauer, in propitiating tones. "Mr. Norton, my junior partner here, he reminds me that we have another customer, one who will take the title as it is, and will pay a better price. A million and a half dollars we can get for this property from another party—yes, we can sell this property to-day."

"To—an American purchaser?" queried Norton.

"Sure—to a purchaser here in America," said Lachenauer.

"And," added Norton, "a million and a half of American money would find its way to William Hohenzollern. Am I right?"

"It is a private matter," said Lachenauer. "That is a mere detail."

"A detail that I came near overlooking to my sorrow," returned Norton.

"At any rate," went on Lachenauer unctuously, graciously, "if you will now deliver to us Mr. O'Reilly's duplicate original of his contract, and also his assignment to Miss Rivers here, why, then, Mr. Norton, we shall be glad to call the matter square."

There was a knock at the door. Billy Lee, the cashier from around the corner, entered, accompanied by a bank porter of generous proportions.

"Greetings," cried Norton. "Now, Mr. Lachenauer," he went on, smiling at Kitty Rivers, and winking surreptitiously at Lee, "your client Hohenzollern, has contracted to deliver us a good and marketable title for One Hundred and One Broadway. We want the title. Mr. Lee here, on Miss Rivers' behalf, has brought here with him one million one hundred thousand dollars legal-tender money——"

Mr. Lee held in his hand, somewhat ostentatiously, a bulging envelope. As Norton talked the cashier poised this envelope, somewhat carelessly, on the corner of the desk, and twirled it about by means of its rubber band. Lachenauer fastened his eyes upon it.

"Now," went on Norton, "I tender this money to you, Mr. Lachenauer, and demand performance of your contract. Mr. Lee, will you physically produce the cash?"

Before Billy Lee could comply with the request, Lachenauer, who was almost as big and powerful as Lee's porter, pounced upon Lee and tore from his grasp the fat envelope he carried. Lee relinquished it without a struggle. Lachenauer backed to the door, his retreat covered by his junior partner.

"Now," cried Lachenauer triumphantly, "now—you have paid your purchase price. I have possession of it—I have nine-tenths of the law with me. I warn you, make no move to get this money back. I shall defend my rights. If you want redress, you

may seek it through the courts. But make no move upon me now, or I shall land you all in jail!"

Billy Lee looked at the bank porter, chuckling. The bank porter, his arms folded across his powerful chest, grinned passively.

"Mr. Lachenauer," exclaimed Billy Lee, "you've got possession of a thousand pieces of blank paper. You don't suppose that I take chances with a million dollars in currency—not much! Norton," he went on, "if you will stand on guard, I'll produce the legal tender. I don't want to be highway-robbed again."

He exhibited the cash. Norton tendered it formally to the now purple-visaged Lachenauer, and the cashier tucked it back into his pocket where it belonged, and departed with it. Norton sighed with relief. That million dollars cash had done him yeoman's service.

"Now, Mr. Lachenauer," he said crisply, "this interview is over."

After the blustering law firm had stormed out in high dudgeon, Kitty turned to Norton, her eyes glowing.

"This is the kind of thing, Dick," she cried, "that you were made for."

"My dear," he returned, "this is the kind of thing that I am doing every day of my life."

"But for other people," she returned.

He nodded. "To be sure," he responded, "it does make a big difference. In this case I'm doing this for you. But let me remind you not to count your chickens before they're hatched. The worst is yet to come."

"Let's get it over with," returned the girl. "What do we do next—where do we go from here?"

"I think," mused Norton, "that we'll go down and take physical, personal possession of the Hohenzollern Building before Lachenauer gets it by fair means or foul."

"Our man is in there," she reminded him, "taking care of it, already."

"Good!" said Norton. "We'll go down and look the man over, and the building over, too."

They went. One Hundred and One Broadway was a ten-story building, faced with weather-beaten marble, of the vintage of the nineties. Above its huge, old-fashioned doorway, carved deeply into stone, was the name of its owner: Hohenzollern. The building was evidently vacant. Tenants, disgusted and annoyed by the wholesale improvements called for by the city, had deserted it. Norton and the girl ascended its broad stone steps and tried the closed door. It was safely locked. Then Norton rang the bell. There was a long pause. Finally, inside, bolts were shot. The big door was opened cautiously to the extent of perhaps an inch. Norton caught a glimpse of a bronzed face and a glittering eye, and of something else—the muzzle of a gun.

"Mr. Bradlo," cried the girl. With a grunt of relief, the man within threw the door open wide.

"You're Bradlo!" exclaimed the title man. "I'm Norton. Miss Rivers told me she'd asked you to help us out. We came down to warn you just a bit. It don't look to me as though you need much warning, Mr. Bradlo."

He glanced at the gun that Bradlo carried in his hand. It was a wicked-looking weapon.

"Oh," said Bradlo, making the door fast behind them as they entered, "I wasn't intending to use this on New Yorkers. I just happened to have it in my hand when you rang the bell. My wife's upstairs. You'll come up and see how we're fixed."

He shot them up to the top story and they climbed a flight of steps that led up to the roof. It was a wonderful roof; just a huge, flat space, like a playground, surrounded by a breast-high parapet. At one end of it was a weather-beaten tent. At the other end a young woman was doing something to a piece of furniture that looked like a railroad tie.

"It is a railroad tie," said Norton, "and what's she doing with it?"

The Bradlo woman swung round upon them. Her face was as weather-beaten and as bronzed as Bradlo's. Her eyes were shining. She was young, a lithe, rangy, handsome, black-eyed girl. She held in one hand a box of small red seals.

"I found 'em in a wastebasket downstairs," she explained, "and we corralled this piece of lumber from some subway men downstairs. Bradlo and me has got a shooting match on up here to-night, and I'm pasting bull's-eyes on."

"Allie," pleaded Bradlo. "You show 'em, Allie."

"I use a rifle," said the girl, leading the way back to the tent. She darted inside,

and brought out a motley assortment of firearms, and flung them to the roof. She selected one.

Norton stared at him. "Do you mean to tell me," he exclaimed, "that you can pink one of those small seals at a distance of ninety feet?"

Bradlo laughed him to scorn. "Ninety feet," he cried, "Allie, you show him, please."

The girl nodded carelessly, lifted her rifle carelessly to her shoulder and carelessly sighted the weapon.

"Wait a minute," cried Norton, "look here. There's an office building back there—hundreds of people in it. Suppose your shot goes wild?"

"Wild?" echoed Bradlo. "You show him, Allie."

Once more the girl sighted her gun, quite casually, and fired. In quick succession she fired twenty shots. Then she lowered her gun.

"Now," said Bradlo, "let's see what damage Allie did."

Allie had done damage. Twenty of the seals had been obliterated by her shots. In answer to Norton's wondering comment, she only shrugged her shoulders.

She drew Norton and Kitty Rivers with her, ten feet or so from the badly punctured tie.

"Where we can watch," she said. At the other end of the roof Bradlo caught up a brace of automatics and immediately began to shoot, apparently without aim. His bullets plumped full tilt, into the openings that Allie's gun had made.

"By gosh!" cried Norton. "Why don't you join a wild West show? You can make big money at it!"

"Money," scornfully cried Allie, "what's money!"

"I should say not," added Bradlo. "Me and Allie—tied down to a program—with somebody always telling us what to do. We don't belong, señor."

As they went back to the tent, Norton glanced curiously at a Navaho blanket that covered some square flat object in the middle of the roof. Bradlo noted his glance. So did Bradlo's wife.

"As you see, we have a tent," explained the girl, "but this here is our bed. We sleep in the open, when all the big buildings have shut their eyes and gone to bed themselves; then we sleep here, under the stars."

They stayed there, in the open, with Bradlo and his girl wife—stayed until the sun set, until the stars came out, until the moon rose. And they ate Bradlo's bacon and drank his sparkling coffee cooked over a camp fire on the roof.

And when Bradlo had at last locked them out into the cold, deserted street that lower Broadway always is at night, Kitty Rivers, her eyes flashing like stars, shamelessly flung her arms about Dick Norton's shoulders and lifted up her face to his.

"Dick, Dick," she whispered, "I want to live up there with you in the open. I want to spend a honeymoon up there."

Next day, during the lunch hour, Norton attended at the office of the United States district attorney in the old post-office building.

"Somebody wants to see me here," he said.

He was ushered into the presence of an assistant district attorney of the name of Chambers.

"Hello," cried Chambers in some surprise, "you don't mean to tell me that you're the Norton who's bought One-O-One Broadway. Look here, did you insert this ad?"

He handed a morning paper to Norton. Norton, with growing inward satisfaction, scanned the advertisement that appeared there. He had already read it half a hundred times before. It was an attractive notice appearing in all the morning papers. It occupied a full quarter of a page. And this is what it said:

ONE HUNDRED AND ONE BROADWAY, the Hohenzollern Building, until recently the property of the Emperor of Germany, has been purchased by an American citizen, is being renovated, will be ready for occupancy on May 1st. American tenants only. Rents at the lowest figure on Broadway. Apply on premises to

RICHARD NORTON, OWNER.

Norton nodded to the A. D. A. "Affirmative to both your questions," he returned. "What then?"

"To tell you the truth," said Chambers, "I don't know what then, but I do know its a damned outrage to let good money get over to Berlin. You might have let us know, at least."

"I haven't paid the purchase price."

"Show me," said Chambers. Norton told

him all about it. Chambers opened wide his eyes. He grinned appreciatively.

"What I want to know is this," continued Norton, "am I going to meet any interference from this office—can I still run my show?"

"So far as we're concerned, you can," said Chambers. "We're not going to interfere with the rights of any citizen. You can carry on your private war with Wilhelm in any manner you see fit. Good luck. You've got a nerve."

When Norton reached his office Lachenauer and his side partner Von Lembeck were awaiting him. They, too, had brought with them printed copies of the advertisement. Lachenauer was a monument of indignation.

"This is an outrage!" cried Lachenauer.

"It is," said Norton, "and I feel it keenly. Why doesn't your man carry out his contract and give us a marketable title to this place. Outrage—I believe you."

"You have taken over the Rivers contract?" queried Lachenauer.

"I have," said Norton.

"Then I demand possession from you—I hold the title deeds."

"The demand," returned Norton, "is refused. I am in possession, Mr. Lachenauer, under a contract to purchase. That contract is on record. That contract on my part has been fully performed. It is your man who's at fault. It is my intention to maintain possession. What are you going to do about it? You ought to know the law."

"You have not paid me one pfennig," cried Lachenauer.

"Why should I?" queried Norton.

"You are filling up this building at cutthroat rates—you are letting offices half price."

"Who has a better right?" said Norton.

"I shall prevent it," yelled Lachenauer. "I shall warn tenants that they buy a lawsuit if they rent from you."

"I'm warning them myself," smiled Norton, "that's why I'm renting to all of them at cutthroat rates."

"I'll throw them out," roared Lachenauer.

"Try it," returned Norton, "and I'll throw you in jail."

Two days later Mr. Pat O'Reilly breezed into Norton's presence, his pink face ruddier than usual. His eyes flashed angrily. He tossed some papers on Norton's desk.

"Nice mess you've got me into, Richard Norton. I've been sued. Lachenauer's had me served with that summons and complaint."

"What have they sued you for?" queried Norton calmly.

"You know as well as I do," cried O'Reilly. "To compel me to take that Hohenzollern title, and for damages. It's a mess—you got me in—now get me out."

"Mr. O'Reilly," returned Norton, evenly, "this isn't the first time you've been sued, is it?"

"No," snapped O'Reilly, "the others were different. Anybody can bring a lawsuit. Been sued twenty times—won every time. This is different. Here they've got the goods."

Norton shrugged his shoulders. "We're both in the same boat, Mr. O'Reilly," he remarked. "I've been sued, too. Here are my papers. Action in ejectment. They're trying to get me out."

"Meantime," cried O'Reilly, "they get the goods on me."

"Meantime," returned Norton, "you'll sit tight and watch me keep my word."

Norton filed pro-forma answers in the O'Reilly suit and in his own. Then he sat back and collected rents. Delay is one of the necessary evils attending litigation within the county of New York. Months later, when the first of the two cases appeared on the day calendar for trial, Norton served on Lachenauer & Von Lembeck a notice of motion that brought them into Special Term Part I.

"Now," said Norton to the court, "I desire the entry of an order staying both these cases, if your honor please."

"On what ground?" queried the court.

"On the ground," smiled Norton, "that William Hohenzollern happens to be an enemy alien just at the present moment."

"This is a private matter," cried Lachenauer. "These are meritorious actions if your honor please."

"Who is this William Hohenzollern?" queried the court. "He's got the same name as the Emperor of Germany."

"He is the Emperor of Germany," said Norton.

The court snorted—so far as it is possible for any court to snort.

"Do you mean to tell me," cried the court, "that that scoundrel has the nerve to appeal to our courts for relief? Appeal to our court against our citizen? Colossal nerve!"

"But your honor——" interposed Lachenauer.

"Counselor," cried the court, "no enemy alien can invoke our institutions in his own behalf. It's preposterous—unthinkable! So far as it lies in my power I'll tie this scoundrel hand and foot. I'll stay these cases until after the completion of the present war."

O'Reilly rolled out of the courtroom with his arm about Norton's shoulders.

"Meantime, Mr. Pat O'Reilly," said Norton, "now that your faith in me has been restored, I want you to do me a favor, if you please."

O'Reilly drew forth his check book. "I'll do that same," he said.

Norton shook his head. "I want you to take dinner to-night, at sunset, with Mrs. Norton and myself."

"With Mrs. Norton and yourself!" exclaimed O'Reilly. "I'll do that same—where do you live, my boy?"

Norton's eyes shone with a new light. "We live, Mr. O'Reilly," he returned, "in a castle in the air."

Lachenauer took an appeal from the court's order restraining the prosecution of the kaiser's action—his appeal lay to the appellate division in New York. It took months to reach the argument. Meantime Norton kept on collecting rents. It took months for the appellate division to decide the case—delay inevitable. Norton, with a smile, collected rents. The appellate division affirmed the order—breathing anathema. Lachenauer went to the court of appeals. Norton still collected rents. And that court, in turn, affirmed the decision of the court below.

And Norton still collected rents.

The wolf then bared his teeth. At six o'clock on a mid-July day in the year 1918, Mr. Pat O'Reilly, who was bound for his weekly Monday-night dinner in a castle in the air, lumbered up the steps of One Hundred and One Broadway. He was surprised to find the ground-floor corridor occupied by fifteen or twenty forbidding-looking loungers.

"What's that bunch doing there?" he queried of the elevator boy.

"Search me," said the boy, "they've been hanging around there for the last fifteen minutes. I don't know who they are."

O'Reilly, reaching Norton's bungalow upon the roof, reported the fact of their presence. Norton called up Bradlo, who was quartered on the floor below. Bradlo went downstairs and looked them over. He appeared upon the roof, shaking his head.

At seven-thirty the last elevator boy went home. At eight Bradlo reported that the men were still lounging in the entrance.

"All right," said Norton, glancing significantly at O'Reilly, "go down and ask 'em what they want."

Bradlo went down and immediately came back. "Bad hombres, all right," he said, "they don't say anything except that they belong here and they're going to stay—that's all."

Norton nodded. "The fine hand of friend Lachenauer, I fear," he mused, "I'll go down and try my luck myself."

When he reached the ground floor Lachenauer was there. As Norton approached Lachenauer was finishing his instructions. He glared at Norton.

"Now, counselor," he said belligerently, "these men here have been placed here by me. They represent me, counselor."

"They represent," said Norton, slowly and carefully, "your client, the Emperor of Germany. Am I right?"

"Yes," said Lachenauer, "they understand all that. They represent the emperor. They know, and I have showed them, that he is the owner of this property. They have seen the title deeds. They are here as of right. They are here to stay. They will let no one come into this building—no one at all. They are in possession of this Hohenzollern Building—they will maintain possession at all cost. They will maintain it until I say the word—till doomsday they will stay, if necessary. And no one shall be allowed to enter. Now you have heard all I have to say. I now have possession of this building. The rest is up to you. So long."

Norton waited until Lachenauer had disappeared. Then he turned to the thugs.

"Now, gentlemen," he said, "you will follow Mr. Lachenauer—you will kindly leave these premises."

"Swell chance!" growled the biggest man in the bunch.

"Gentlemen," went on Norton mildly, "you will understand this. You are trespassers. You found me in possession here. Peaceably in possession. You are now forcibly interrupting my possession. I notify you that you must decamp forthwith. In other words, get out."

"Not so you can notice it," said the leader of the gang.

"In that case," went on Norton, "I must call up the police."

At the mention of the police, two or three thugs moved uneasily. But the leader with an oath reassured them.

"We got rights here—you stick," he warned them.

The police captain came around in person. Norton explained the situation. The leader of the gang of thugs drew from his pocket a typewritten sheet of paper.

"Now, cap," he said, "that's why we're here. If you got your doubts, you can call up that law firm there, and see for yourself."

The captain called up Lachenauer and got him at his office. He heard Lachenauer's side of the story. He hung up the receiver and bowed to Norton.

"Any way you look at it, counselor," said the captain of police, "this seems to be a case for the civil courts. You got to go to them. What can I do?"

"I'll lose my tenants," said Norton. "These men won't let my tenants in to-morrow morning when they come. I want these men removed."

The captain shook his head. "I can't see what rights I got to interfere," he said, "it all sifts down to that—it's for the civil courts. If there's violence, of course——"

"There won't be no row," said the leader of the gang. "Only—we're here to stay, that's all."

Norton bowed to the captain. "It's all right, captain," he said, "I merely wanted to exhaust my remedy. Will you close the door when you go out? It's going to rain."

It was not only going to rain, it was raining in torrents. The captain still polite, still adamant, left, without closing the door. The thugs shut it after him.

"Now, gentlemen," said Norton, to the gang, "let me make myself very clear. You are admittedly in the employ of the kaiser of Germany——"

"Well, what of it?" demanded the chief thug. "He owns this building, doesn't he?"

"Admittedly," proceeded Norton, "you are in his employ. Your employer is at a state of war with this country. Through you, he has invaded my domain—through you, he now commits an act of warfare upon me. I am an American citizen. I shall defend my rights—my property. This is a final warning. You have till ten o'clock tonight to leave the premises. After that—good night."

He left them, disappearing in the direction of the elevator. They set up a howl of derision at his retreat.

It has already been said that One Hundred and One Broadway was an old-fashioned office building of the vintage of the nineties. It was a building of conventional type. The front hall was broad. The stairs to the second floor rose from it without turn. The ground-floor hall, narrowed by these stairs, proceeded to a dingy recess at the rear of the building. Here were the elevator shafts. Ground-floor offices ranged to the left of this long hallway. At the present juncture there were lights all along the hallway, lights in one of the elevator cages, lights in the front office, and lights at the head of the stairs. The gang, prepared for a long vigil, made itself comfortable upon the stairs—that is, it did so until quarter to ten o'clock. At quarter to ten there was the faint tinkle of an electric bell and all the lights went out. The gang found itself plunged into darkness. Appalled, it left the stairs, clustered itself once more in the front hall, and opened the front door of the building, letting in the rain, but letting in also, the faint reflection of street lights on Broadway. The darkness and the rain, pouring down outside in sheets, dampened their ardor. They moved about in the dim passageway uncertainly, conversing in husky whispers, wondering.

At three minutes to ten there was another tinkle of the far-off electric bell. Lights flashed on—brilliant lights, hailed by sighs of relief. But they were flashed on only in the front hallway of the building. Somebody closed the front door, shutting out the storm. The leader, lighting a fresh cigarette, noted the presence of a piece of paper on the floor. He picked it up. It said:

You have till ten.

In the full light of the front hallway the leader peered into the darkness—there was much darkness to peer into. The rear hallway was black, the adjacent offices were black, the stairway was black, the floor above was black. The leader waved the piece of paper in the air.

"Whattaya mean—you have till ten?" he yelled.

He was immediately answered. From the blackness of the elevator shaft two guns

barked—two bullets pierced the paper and whisked it from his hand. The leader, stunned, scared, outraged, ripped out an incoherent oath, and reached for his hip pocket. His hat flew off, punctured. The man next him had been puffing on a big black cigar. This man stopped puffing suddenly—the cigar flicked itself mysteriously from between his teeth.

"My Gawd!" cried this man, choking as he said it, for another bullet tipped his hat rakishly over his left ear. Panic-stricken, this man made a dash for the stairs.

In the excitement, the leader found that the door leading into the big front office was unlocked.

"Everybody follow me!" he yelled.

The gang obeyed, herding behind him like terror-stricken sheep. As they surged in, a stentorian voice greeted them:

"*Ten o'clock—make ready—fire.*"

A rattling volley followed. From all four corners of the room guns barked, flame leaped at them in a steady, clattering stream.

"My Gawd!" cried the leader, surging back. "Gimme room—let me get away from here." With a snort of fear he sprang back into the hall and made for the front door with the ardor of a bull moose tearing through a Maine forest. This time the door was open—nobody knew how or why.

They fled, whimpering with fear, into the safety and the quiet of Broadway. Behind them the huge door of the Hohenzollern Building clanged shut once again. The lights flashed on again. Into this brilliance there emerged from the surrounding darkness two women and three men. Mr. Pat O'Reilly lifted above his head a smoking pistol which, fortunately for the Lachenauer gang, had been loaded only with blank cartridge. He mopped his brow.

"Right is might," he cried. "Hurrah! We win!"

A week later, as the sun went down, Norton, leaning with Kitty on the parapet of their castle in the air, turned to O'Reilly.

"You really mean it?" he queried. "You'll take this contract off our hands?"

"Do I really mean it," cried O'Reilly, "do you really mean you're going to let me have it?"

"Why shouldn't we?" said Norton. "Kitty and I are over seventy-five thousand dollars to the good."

"And going strong," added O'Reilly. "Why in blazes don't you keep right on?"

Norton shook his head. "As a matter of ethics," he returned, "I don't know but the whole thing belongs to you."

"As a matter of ethics!" snorted O'Reilly. "Why, glory be, man, I'd have given these Potsdam rascals a hundred thousand dollars to let me off. And here you go and clean 'em up. Well, I'll take it—I need excitement every hour. It's meat and drink to me. Now, how much bonus do you want?"

"Bonus!" cried Norton. "You're doing us a favor to take the contract off our hands."

"I'll draw a check for a hundred thousand dollars and we'll call it square," exclaimed O'Reilly.

"Not in a hundred thousand years," said Norton.

O'Reilly pondered for a moment. Then he drew a check and handed it to Kitty. "There's twenty-five thousand dollars—that'll round out well your profit on this deal. You'll take it or the deal is off."

They took it. And then O'Reilly drew another check for a like amount. He handed it to Norton.

"My boy," he cried, "there's your general retainer as general counsel for the Pat O'Reilly interests. I need you in my business, glory be."

Norton glanced at Kitty, his eyes glowing. But Kitty's eyes were troubled.

"Mr. O'Reilly," she protested, "listen. When I married Richard Norton we made a contract—and it holds. Dick wasn't to be anybody's hireling—he wasn't to be bossed, not even by myself—he wasn't to do the bidding of anybody else. And now——"

O'Reilly laughed aloud. "Woman, dear," he cried, "do you think I'd hire a man like Dick Norton here to do my bidding—to do just what I tell him to? You've got another guess. I'm hiring Richard Norton to tell me what to do. I'm the boy to do his bidding. I'll be always following the advice of a lad like him. Ah, you've got a great man there, woman dear!"

He left them there, staring at the checks, and staring at the ruddy western sky. The dusk already was beginning to settle down. Norton gathered the girl into his arms—their eyes were shining eyes.

"Ah, this is the life, El Capitan!" she cried.

The Red Sector

A STORY OF THE NAVY IN WAR TIME*

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "The Wall Between," "The Quiet Life," Etc.

WHEN young Howard Glennan enlisted in the naval reserve, he had high hopes of being sent across the water to play the great game of hunting the Hun in destroyers. He shared this eager ambition with two hundred thousand other bluejackets who tugged at the leash of discipline and duty like so many terriers. To be kept at home in a training station or condemned to the coast patrol seemed like looking through the bars of a cage.

The war had done more than reawaken the old shipyards of Spring Haven on the coast of Maine. The town which had drowsily recalled its brave memories of the seafaring of earlier generations now swarmed with fighting men in the blue and white of the navy. They swung their hammocks in empty warehouses and drilled and scrubbed to the shrill mandates of the bugle and the bos'n's pipe. Their armed launches and power cruisers scurried seaward to chase phantom submarines and returned with wet and hungry crews. They were learning their trade against the time of need, and the spirit and traditions of the service were quietly, swiftly molding them anew. They themselves, their opinions and desires, were of no consequence. What the country and the navy intended them to be and do—this was the vital factor, the one essential.

The army and its recruiting posters had held no charm for such a youth as Howard Glennan, who had been bred to salt water like his fathers before him, who had tried to run away to sea at the tender age of twelve and was dragged back to school a weeping mutineer. He belonged to the web-footed breed and with the perversity which parents occasionally display, his dogmatic sire had compelled him to drudge in a grocery store and vowed to keep him there until he was twenty-one. The sea was played out, declaimed the elder Glennan, who had long ago retired from the command of a Yankee square-rigger, and he'd stand no such darned nonsense from any boy of his.

It was different, however, when the call to action came. Grizzled Captain John Glennan, still a powerful, deep-chested figure of a man, pounded his only son on the back as he shouted:

"The navy wants my consent before you enlist, Howard? Why, blast their stupid picture, it's an insult! Why shouldn't I consent? Don't they know who you are? There's been Glennans of Spring Haven afloat in every war, from Caleb that had the *True American* privateer in the Revolution and scotched the Britishers' coat tails for 'em. Go to it, son, and help blow those German outlaws to Davy Jones where they belong."

"Thank you, dad," smiled Howard. "What about our grocery store? Can you get along without me?"

"I may put up the shutters," thundered the father, "and let her stay out of commission until we've licked the Huns. S'pose I'll set and twiddle my thumbs behind a counter? There'll be dozens of new merchant ships needing officers. I guess I'd better trundle into Boston right away and write my name down. Mother won't starve, even if I get drownded. There's a dollar or two laid by in the toe of a stocking."

In a way, the joke was on young Howard Glennan as matters turned out. Summer had almost passed and he was still puttering about with the coast patrol out of Spring Haven, while his doughty father had sailed as first officer of a big steel cargo steamer, was torpedoed and picked up adrift off the coast of France, and had gone out again as skipper of a tanker bound to the North Sea. He wrote home that being blown up was exciting until a man got used to it. Shipmates of his who had been h'isted three or four times told him that the novelty wore

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off. Anyhow, the life agreed with him better than beating around the Horn in a windjammer in the dead o' winter.

Such brisk tidings filled Howard Glennan with chagrin and made him melancholy. He had assumed that his old barnacle of a dad was a back number, merely fit to look on while adventurous youth fought the war and risked its dangers. Why, at this rate, a man was safer in the navy than if he played football or drove a car. They took too good care of you, in fact, fussing about your health and your habits and how you folded your clothes and brushed your teeth and stowed your canvas bag.

When ashore he lived at the training station which had overflowed into a third warehouse, while for sea duty he was assigned to a fifty-foot patrol boat which bucketed among the islands off the coast and dared the open ocean in fair weather. She had been a shapely craft and the pride of her owner, but after her enrollment in the navy he viewed her once, rubbed his eyes, then wept and turned away. The emotions of Howard Glennan were similar. He regarded a vessel with the eye of a mariner. To spoil her beauty was an act of cruelty.

This *Golden Rod,* "C. P. 178," had been hauled out on the marine railway at the Fenwick shipyard and young Glennan, able seaman, was under the bottom scraping paint with two of his comrades. Presently he crawled out, eased his cramped muscles, and gazed at the unholy transformation which had bedaubed the sides with patches of pink, blue, and green in a delirious scheme of camouflage, clapped on a rough deck house which looked like an overgrown hencoop, sawed away the polished oak rails to make clearance for a gun, and boarded up the plate-glass windows of the cabin. The *Golden Rod* might be efficient, but she was no longer elegant. Her aspect was positively dissolute.

The yard was building two four-masted schooners whose handsome hulls rose from the sloping keel blocks which led to the river's edge. A lanky, leathery patriarch, who wore a black coat and a flapping straw hat, appeared to be in charge of one of them, and he now strolled over to squint at the patrol boat squatting high and dry. With a nod and a chuckle he extended a corded hand to young Glennan and exclaimed:

"It's nigh on forty years since I begun imbibin' three fingers of Medford rum before breakfast to keep the dampness out, and I dunno as it ever did me a mite o' harm. But I quit right now till that loony packet of yourn is away and gone. For pity's sake, look at her, Howard. She's an acute case of nautical tremens."

"Those gobs of paint, Cap'n Amazeen? That's to fool the enemy," seriously replied the bluejacket. "The colors blend at sea and decrease her visibility."

"So I'm told, but it's highly indecent," was the comment. "And what do you cal'late to do with that invisible little nightmare when she's afloat?"

"Oh, we take our turn—a three-days' trip—north'ard from Pemaquid Point. The patrol areas are marked in blocks on the chart. It's no fun. Too stupid."

Captain Wesley Amazeen shaved a chew of tobacco and stuffed it in his wizened cheek. Age had not faded his shrewd eyes nor crippled the sinewy frame. Tough as whalebone and wicked as sin, his fellow skippers had called him, but there was whimsical tenderness in his smile as he said:

"I've watched you grow up, Howard, and your old man and me sailed together in the fo'castle when we were boys. I'm proud to see you wearin' navy clothes. It's a he-man's job, and I expect you to shove along an' win promotion."

"I'll try, sir," replied Glennan, his cheek a bit redder, his head held high. Captain Amazeen's manner had implied a veiled rebuke. "I'm an awful dub at mathematics, solid ivory, so I've passed up working for an ensign's commission. But I hope to be a petty officer before long."

"You ought to be, Howard. There ain't a smarter coast pilot 'twixt here and the Penobscot, and you're mighty handy aboard any kind of a vessel. But you've got to put your back into it. Do all you can and then a little bit more."

"Do you mean to accuse me of sojering?" hotly demanded Glennan.

"No, but I watched you from the stagin' over yonder," calmly explained the old man, "and you wa'n't handlin' that scraper as if winning the war depended on how fast you cleaned the weeds off them planks. I know how you young high-steppers feel. There's no glory in stayin' at home. This Uncle Sam's navy isn't run by a passel of fools, son. They know where they need you lads

most. Better leave it to Josephus Daniels and his star-spangled admirals."

"But we may be kept on this silly coast patrol until the end of the war," protested the able seaman.

"Silly?" croaked Captain Wesley Amazeen, and his voice was confidential as he went on: "It's no more than a hunch, Howard, but it'll pay you to keep your weather eye lifted every blessed minute. Use your wits, too, and sharpen 'em regular, like honin' a razor. Your knowledge of these waters and the folks alongshore is wuth somethin'. The regular navy men ain't got it. Them pizen Germans is as busy as weevils in a barrel of hard-tack."

Glennan blinked at this and his face was incredulous. Old Amazeen had rambled on like a man in his dotage, but he was one of the superintendents of the shipyard and renowned for handling artisans and materials to the best advantage. After a thoughtful pause, the bluejacket ventured to say:

"A hunch, sir? Then you think there is something in the wind? It never occurred to me, and I can't imagine what you are driving at."

"No more can I," grimly declared the mariner, "but they used to say I could smell trouble in the fo'castle long before it started. You are Cap'n John Glennan's boy and rated as a chip of the old block. Now forget what I said and turn to on your job. You won't blab or bungle, if I know your blood. Jest remember, Howard, that Fritz is a slimy fighter and the war zone begins on this side o' the big pond."

It was an important interview for the happy-go-lucky young seaman who had been bitten by discontent. He was candid enough to admit that he deserved the kindly censure. His heart had not been in the daily task. He was not living it up to the hilt. The gospel of duty, hour by hour, had become a trifle blurred. As for Wesley Amazeen's hunch, the old man never told all he knew, and his knack of sensing the intangible was said to be uncanny.

Now when a decent young man of twenty is jarred by some bump or other, his natural impulse is to talk it over with the girl he knows best of all. If she is the right one, she offers the kind of sympathy which heals the hurts of wounded pride and inspires high resolves. Upon a sea-washed headland near Spring Haven was a summer hotel, modern, large, and expensive, which was called the Winnebassett. In the humble rôle of a clerk in the paternal store, Howard Glennan had delivered many a wagonload of groceries at the kitchen entrance, while in the evening he might have been seen, correctly clad and displaying excellent manners, in the company of one of the most charming guests, Miss Barbara Downes, who was socially recognized even by exclusive persons from Boston.

Her father, Franklin Downes, had made his money in copper, but there were New England sea captains among his forbears and he was fond of Spring Haven and its salty chronicles. It had been his democratic habit in previous summers to linger in Captain John Glennan's grocery store where he swung his legs from a counter and listened to yarns of vanished ships and tarry sailors whose souls had fled to Fiddler's Green. Mrs. Franklin Downes was a placid, motherly woman whose tastes were of the simplest and whose soul was unvexed by problems of caste and position. There was no reason why they should put on airs because they were rich, said she, and too much money was an affliction anyhow. The nicest people seemed to get along with precious little of it.

There were guests at the Winnebassett who had been shocked to see Barbara Downes walking or dancing with the village grocer's son, but when such gossip reached her ears she took pains to present young Mr. Glennan to these fastidious critics as a member of an old and respected family which had won prestige for the Stars and Stripes on every sea through six generations. The war had swept false social standards into the rubbish heap. The uniform now leveled all barriers, excepting those of army and navy rank. When Howard Glennan, able seaman, called at the hotel nobody knew or cared what he had been before he enlisted. He bore himself as a gentleman and this was enough.

As soon as the giddy *Golden Rod* slid into the water from the marine railway he was granted a few hours of liberty. In his blue blouse with the rolling collar, loose kerchief very precisely knotted, flowing trousers, and cap set on three hairs, he was a proper sailor, and the naval station might have been proud of its handiwork.

The June twilight was fading when he skirted the beach and turned to climb a path which led over the rocks. Strong and tire-

less, he almost ran up the rough ascent to the hotel, and was about to cross the lawn when his questing vision caught a glimpse of Barbara Downes, who had walked toward the outer end of the headland and the white lighthouse that crowned it. She stood adorably outlined against the sky, a figure slender and erect, and Glennan paused to gaze at what should have been a flawless picture but, alas, it was marred for him by the intrusion of another man. He was a stranger and he knew how to make himself agreeable. This much was already obvious. Jealousy clouded the sailor's bright mood. Miss Downes was quick to read his emotions. His face was an open book and he wore his heart on his sleeve.

The other man was older, perhaps thirty, with an air of poise and resolution, of having done things and done them well. He wore his clothes with distinction, his manner was easy and cordial, and Glennan reluctantly admitted to himself that the fellow was confoundedly good looking. Shaking hands as the girl introduced them, he affably explained:

"I am in charge of construction work for the new training station. I hope to move you out of those old warehouses in a few weeks. It's a rush job. Nothing is too good for the navy."

"Great news, Mr. Kline," replied Glennan. "We surely do need more room, and those rough floors are awful to keep clean. The dust of a hundred years shakes down whenever a man turns over in his hammock. Are you from the navy department?"

"No. I wish I wore the uniform. My firm is doing some contract work for the government. This is our first naval job."

"Mr. Kline is with Kimball & Bacon," explained Barbara Downes. "They built the power house for one of father's copper properties in Montana. This is how we happened to get acquainted to-day."

"Your first visit to Spring Haven?" politely inquired Howard Glennan. "The idea of a 'rush job' would have startled us natives a few months ago."

"A town with atmosphere, charm, a storied past," responded Mr. Guy Webber Kline. "I cruised along this coast in a friend's yacht several years ago, but we missed old Spring Haven."

They moved in the direction of the long piazza. The sailor was in a silent humor while the construction engineer talked fluently and held Miss Barbara's interest. It was something, just to sit and look at her, pensively reflected the youngster. He came out of himself and listened when Mr. Kline recalled several diverting incidents of that holiday cruise along the Maine coast.

"You must be acquainted with all the reefs and islands, Mr. Glennan," he suggested. "It's a wonder we didn't try to run over a few of them. The skipper of the yacht was one of those stubborn Norwegians who refused to take advice and did his own navigating instead of picking up a fisherman or pilot."

"You ran a chance of losing your boat," said Howard. "It's not safe to run by the charts unless you know the set of the tides and the cross currents."

"Right you are. You don't have to tell me," agreed Mr. Kline, with a laugh. "I flattered myself that I learned something while we were blundering about. There was one mighty close shave. My knees wabbled, I'll confess, and I'm sure I turned pale. We were trying to make harbor before dark, but the fog shut down and we poked along at three or four knots, feeling our way among those rocky islands. The skipper had no idea where he was, but the old fool refused to anchor. Finally the weather lifted a bit and we saw a few stars overhead. Then a lighthouse flashed dead ahead. I'll swear it was right on top of us. Before the yacht could back off, we rammed the steep cliff at the base of the light, smashed our bowsprit, and crumpled the cutwater like an old hat."

Howard Glennan leaned forward in the chair, his professional interest kindled.

"And your forward bulkhead held?" he asked. "There was deep water right up to the base of the cliff?"

"There must have been," answered Mr. Guy Webber Kline. "Yes, the yacht stayed afloat and we limped into port next day. It was Thorpe's Island that we rammed, as we discovered on the chart. But for the thick weather, we could have seen the light ten miles away and steered to the west of the red sector. That gives you a safe passage through the channel, as I recall it."

"Thorpe's Island?" echoed Glennan very abruptly. "And the light shows a red sector which you must keep to the west'ard of? Oh, yes, I understand, Mr. Kline. You have a good memory for a landsman. How long ago was that cruise of yours?"

"Four years. A night like that stamps itself on one's memory, don't you know. How deep is the water where we smashed full tilt into Thorpe's Island?"

"Twelve fathom close in, shoaling to seven feet in the middle of the passage where a ledge is marked by a spindle beacon with a gas buoy at the tail of it. Lucky you didn't pile up on the ledge, Mr. Kline."

A little later the engineer excused himself on the plea that a pile of blue prints demanded his attention. Glennan bade him a cordial good night at which Mr. Kline smiled discreetly. He was quite aware that the ingenuous sailor had thought him superfluous. Barbara Downes glanced after him and tactlessly remarked:

"Awfully pleasant, isn't he, Howard? He made a hit with father. That is how he happened to dine with us."

"He seems like a good sport," agreed the sailor, but without enthusiasm. "If you like him I suppose I ought to keep my mouth shut, but, by jingo, I can't——"

"What in the world!" exclaimed the girl. "How could he have offended you?"

It was the advice of Captain Wesley Amazeen that had stirred the young man to vigilant attention instead of careless disregard of what went on around him. He was a daydreamer awakened. No trifles were insignificant. Otherwise he might have paid no heed to the blunder of which the agreeable Mr. Guy Webber Kline had been guilty. Unhesitatingly, he resolved to confide in Barbara. She was a loyal comrade and he needed her counsel and partnership. It was not "blabbing" to discuss the curious episode with her. His voice betrayed excitement as he said:

"It sounds queer, but the clever engineer made a slip that lays him open to suspicion. He had no idea that he did it, and it almost got by me."

"Suspicion of what?" demanded Barbara, who had common sense as well as beauty. She inferred that jealousy had twisted the vision of this devoted admirer.

"Well, I don't know what," confessed Howard, rubbing his chin in a rueful manner. "I may be a false alarm. Now listen, please, and swear to keep mum. You heard him call it Thorpe's Island? Do you know where he found that name? It is on a new chart just revised by the hydrographic office and printed for the use of the navy coast patrol. The chart has not been placed on sale. Copies issued to us are marked secret and confidential because they have certain marks, bearings and data which will be removed from the edition given out to mariners."

In breathless accents Miss Downes apologized for doubting so remarkable a young man and begged him to unwind another strand of the mystery.

"But what has Thorpe's Island to do with it, Howard? It got in the way of their yacht, which was very rude of it, but I fear I am not bright enough to follow you."

"It is called Thorpe's Island on this new naval chart *but nowhere else*. It has always been Merry's Island to fishermen and coastwise mariners, and this is the name of it on the charts in general use."

"How perplexing," cried Miss Downes, puckering her brows. "What is the reason for changing it to Thorpe's Island?"

"To prevent confusion and make navigation easier for naval officers unfamiliar with the coast," replied Glennan, with more confidence. "Mary Island lies only seven miles to the south'ard and it sounds too much like Merry's Island. You can imagine a navy skipper of the coast patrol hailing a dory or a lumber schooner to get a set of bearings and having one of these names shouted back at him. He cocks an eye at the chart, finds Mary Island and Merry's Island not far apart, and may go streaking off on a totally wrong course. Hence Thorpe's Island from now on."

"But, Howard, you are accusing Mr. Kline of stealing one of your navy charts or of looking at it when he hadn't ought to!" exclaimed the scandalized Barbara.

"He had better get busy with an alibi," affirmed the sailor. "He has no right to examine one of those charts, of course. He is not in the service. Now, can't you figure out how he made the slip? All charts may look alike to him and it hadn't occurred to him that the name of an island might have been changed. One thing more! That lighthouse did *not* show a red sector until March of this year. He said his yachting cruise was four years ago, remember?"

"And the light was changed only a few months ago? There was no red sector until then?" queried the girl.

"Surest thing you know. Mr. Guy Webber Kline cribbed that from the navy chart, too."

"But I am quite sure he is not a stupid

man, Howard. To let himself be tripped so easily—er—by a mere boy."

"Thanks for the insult," was the dignified retort. "The trouble with that bird is that he's no sailor. I don't believe he ever cruised on this coast in anybody's yacht. The yarn didn't listen right to me. But he might have got by with it if he hadn't assumed that islands and lights were the same on all charts. It was a slight bet he overlooked."

"But why did he tell you the story?" was the very natural query.

"Perhaps to coax some information out of me, a little at a time. You noticed that he asked the depth of water off Thorpe's Island. Next he may try to pump me about the tide and the bottom. Or it may have been merely to scrape acquaintance by talking my kind of stuff. I am all in the dark, Barbara, but I don't like the notion of his squinting at confidential charts. And, besides, Captain Wesley Amazeen had a hunch. Maybe this is it."

"Are you quite sure you don't dislike Mr. Kline just because—well, because—you know what I mean, don't you?" suggested Miss Downes, after a deliberate pause. "I want you to be fair-minded, Howard."

"Because he got on so well with you?" cried her sturdy champion. "I'd love to punch his head for it, but that wouldn't be getting on with the war. No, I promise to play the game on the level. It is your war and mine, Barbara. Will you help me keep an eye on Mr. Guy Webber Kline?"

Her warm hand clasped his in token of an alliance and her voice rang strong and true as she answered:

"Your navy and mine, Howard, and I will stand watch and watch with you."

The *Golden Rod* went to sea next morning on patrol duty. The ensign in command had won his commission in the naval militia before the war, and he was a lawyer by trade, an earnest young man whom not even seasickness could daunt. Tall, thin, and dry of manner, he ruled his cockleshell of a cruiser with the most punctilious attention to detail. His dozen bluejackets respected his zeal and agreed that he would make a good officer in time. In a tight pinch they felt that he would show sand and resolution, and this counted greatly in his favor. Behind his back they imitated the precise bearing and awkward gestures of Ensign Ambrose J. Walters, but they jumped when he gave an order and he, in turn, declared that there were no finer lads in the whole American navy.

The acting navigator of the *Golden Rod* was Howard Glennan, able seaman, who could have set most of the courses with his eyes shut. When released from his trick at the wheel he curled up and slept on a transom in the deck house, ready for a call. The other men drilled at the popgun in the bow, polished brass, were taught to handle cutlass and rifle, and in the leisure hours Ensign Walters delivered lectures on the theory and practice of naval warfare, quoting Nelson, Farragut and Captain Mahan. He intended that the *Golden Rod* should be ready to engage the enemy. It is doubtful whether he would have turned tail to a first-class battleship.

Many of the islands scattered far off the Maine coast are singularly remote and unfrequented, bits of wilderness marked from seaward by a few trees all twisted by the winter gales, a patch of green grass, or the flash of surf playing among gigantic bowlders. It seems as though some mighty convulsion of nature must have hurled them where they lie, as fragments of a bursting shell are flung at random. Ensign Walters liked to cruise among them so long as he had a capable pilot in Seaman Glennan, for they broke the uneasy motion of the Atlantic swell beyond and prevented those dismal qualms which imparted a tinge of green to his sandy complexion.

The wind, breathed soft from the land and the sky, indicated settled weather as the patrol boat dropped one island and fairway after another over her stern, and the crew cast wistful glances at the galley window from which an aroma of fish chowder was wafted. The navy had called them from factory, farm and college to meet the test without fear or favor. The barefooted lad who had been peeling potatoes glanced up as the *Golden Rod* slipped past a plutocratic summer place which resembled the estate of a feudal baron, and casually remarked:

"There's mother and sis waving handkerchiefs. I don't dare wigwag back. Seems funny not to see the *Hesperus* anchored in the cove. Dad wrote that he had sold her to the government for a dollar and she's on her way to the French coast. Some seagoing boat, that. A regular young liner. He was fitting out for a cruise around the world when this war busted loose."

"Who wouldn't leave a happy home for this?" grinned a stalwart comrade as he plied a deck mop. "Say, bo, you ought to have worked pull enough to be shifted aboard your own yacht. Why miss a chance to beat it for the war zone?"

"Pull be hanged!" retorted the cook's helper. "My boss in the galley says I skin a spud like an artist. What more can I ask? They waste no compliments in this man's navy."

Late in the afternoon the *Golden Rod* rounded an islet of naked granite that rose like a lonely pinnacle. Far in the distance, blurred by the smoky haze, the white shaft of a lighthouse barely lifted above the horizon. Howard Glennan gazed at it with more than passing interest and turned to scan the chart which was pinned to a table in the wheelhouse. Ensign Walters squinted through his binoculars, replaced them in the rack, and said:

"Thorpe's Island? The best run yet, Glennan. It took us forty minutes longer last trip, with the tide about the same."

"Yes, sir. I tried that short cut through Parlin Thoroughfare. It's safe enough if you reach it at high water."

Glennan changed the course two points and looked at the compass card. Sighting Thorpe's Island light had recalled the genial Mr. Guy Webber Kline and his reference to revisions of the chart which he was not presumed to know. It was too intangible to mention to Ensign Walters, who might laugh at such conjectures as rubbish. He was in a sociable humor and presently exclaimed:

"The newspapers have printed some nonsense about German wireless stations on this coast. Nothing in it, of course. They couldn't hide a plant on one of these islands."

"Right you are, sir," replied Glennan. "Our patrol would nail 'em in a jiffy. And the fishermen are good scouts. They would report anything that looked queer."

"Yes, the naval intelligence people keep in touch with the natives, I am quite sure. This wireless stuff is like rumors of a submarine base. All moonshine. Some bright reporter invents a yarn, or a motor boat sees a lobster buoy adrift and calls it a lurking periscope."

"It is something to talk about, sir. The public ashore will bite at 'most anything these days. They beg for exciting dope, whether it's true or not. I'll bet I know this coast better than any German, and I couldn't tuck a submarine base away to save my soul."

The ensign nodded assent and spoke in his abrupt, official manner. "Slow down beyond Thorpe's Island and stand well out to get plenty of room before dark."

"Aye, sir. If you don't mind I should like to make a turn after the light is lit and run back to fix a bearing or two. This is a new chart and——"

"Anything wrong with it, Glennan? You have run past here several times and seemed sure of your courses."

"The chart is correct, sir, but we may be in a hurry one of these nights, and there is another channel which I might want to use."

"Very well. We'll loaf out here this evening and then jog to the west'ard and exchange signals with the patrol boat in the next block."

The crew loafed on deck in the dusk while the little *Golden Rod* rolled with a gentle, cradling motion and showed no lights as she sheared through a placid sea. The light on Thorpe's Island flashed like a brilliant jewel, its rays as white as a diamond until Glennan steered across their path and the color changed to ruby, the warning to mariners to beware and go clear.

"The red sector," said Glennan to himself. "Now I am going to follow the edge of it inshore as far as I dare and then out to sea until it dims."

His motive was scarcely more than a sailor's instinct. The purpose of a shore light was to indicate direction and position. He was curious to find out for himself just how accurately Thorpe's Island light might be used to locate a particular point on the chart. Cross-bearings would be required, of course, so as the *Golden Rod* moved along the edge of the red sector, Seaman Howard Glennan kept a sharp lookout for other lights which might serve to form an angle and a line of intersection. He discovered two of these, one well inshore, a fixed light at the entrance to Clamshell Gut, and another ten miles out to seaward—the faint twinkle of the revolving lenses that marked the Sow and Pigs.

Ensign Ambrose Walters, who had been somewhat unhappy since supper because the deck insisted on heaving up and down, spoke rudely to his acting navigator.

"What do you think this is—a cakewalk?

Are you going to promenade up and down that red sector all night?"

"All done, sir," cheerily answered the sailor. "I'll know that light next time I see it."

At the end of his watch Glennan penciled two tiny crosses on the chart to mark the cross-bearings. With the parallel ruler he obtained the exact compass bearings of the intersecting ranges and jotted them on a scrap of paper which he tucked in his blouse. If any one should wish to make unlawful use of Thorpe's Island light or the waters thereabouts, there was one able seaman of the naval reserve who hoped to discover the how and why of it. He thought Captain Wesley Amazeen would approve. At any rate, he was paying attention to trifles and keeping his weather eye lifted.

Three days later the *Golden Rod* returned to Spring Haven and her lively young bluejackets were glad to scamper ashore and be rid of their cramped quarters for a brief respite. Howard Glennan went to the training station on the wharf and changed his clothes before falling in for drill. On the water front near by was the site of an old shipyard whose buildings were tottering in decay. The place was astir again, gangs of laborers tearing down the sheds and shops, others digging foundation trenches, while the railroad spur was filled with cars loaded with lumber, cement and machinery.

The man in authority was Mr. Guy Webber Kline who seemed to be a man of his word. He was making "a rush job" of the new barracks for the naval reserve, but it was haste without confusion or waste motion. Clad in white flannel, cool and debonair, he halted to talk to a foreman who answered with a smile, or solved the troubles of another group which had been delayed by a balky hoisting engine. He had the knack of keeping a dozen tasks under way without bluster.

"I'll have to hand it to him," murmured Glennan. "He delivers the goods, and I ought to be ashamed of myself for suspecting him of anything crooked."

Like one who steers his course by a star, the able seaman betook himself straight to the hotel when the day's work was done. The Downes family had motored to Spruce Inlet for a shore dinner, he was informed, and expected to return during the evening. This was forlorn news for a young man whose few hours of leave were golden, but he concluded to wait, having fortified himself with supper at the bare, scrubbed table of the training station. An open fire beckoned him into one of the small parlors where he found an armchair and a magazine or two. Having lost sleep aboard the *Golden Rod,* he was drowsily comfortable when Mr. Guy Webber Kline sauntered in, hailed him with genial courtesy, and drew up a chair.

"I saw your boat come in," said the engineer. "Your skipper, Ambrose Walters, is an acquaintance of mine. We met in Chicago last winter, at the University Club. I can't quite picture him as a sea dog."

"Mr. Walters will learn," said Howard. "You can't expect to find enough sailors to man our navy. The supply is too small."

"But chaps of your sort ought to be trained as officers, Glennan. If I can do anything—a word in the right quarter sometimes helps, don't you know. I know a lot of people in Washington."

Howard flushed and his voice was emphatic as he exclaimed:

"Thanks, but I'd rather go ahead under my own steam. I don't care to be towed. I can wait until Mr. Walters recommends me for promotion."

"The proper spirit," said the engineer, and he changed the subject. "I shall turn in rather early to-night. It's tiresome, this getting a job under way with the labor supply all shot to pieces."

"I thought you were hustling things along in great shape, Mr. Kline, when I reached port to-day."

"Oh, we are getting along with it. I hoped to enjoy this coast—run about a bit in my car—but I am lashed to the mast. I'm afraid I won't be able to break out of Spring Haven at all. I have seen absolutely nothing but the road between the hotel and the town."

Glennan said something about the quaint coastwise villages which tourists found so attractive and then the conversation slackened. The glowing logs in the wide fireplace wrought their magic spell. It was pleasant to stare at them in contented silence. Suddenly, Howard Glennan's reveries were disturbed by something which caused him to sit erect, smother a yarn, and steal an alert glance at the abstracted Mr. Kline. Then the nose of young Glennan sniffed, very cautiously. His sense of smell had been trained at sea and there were certain odors so familiar that he could identify them anywhere.

This aroma was so faint, so elusive that he sniffed again. Then he rose from his chair to poke the fire and brushed Mr. Guy Webber Kline in passing. This amiable gentleman yawned, remarked that he had almost dropped off asleep, and bade his young friend adieu for the night. Glennan lingered in the parlor a little while and then tramped the windy piazza until an automobile drew up and the Downes family disembarked. The shore dinner had been a bit too much for the mother, whose appetite sometimes outran her discretion. She announced that her husband was to find the hot-water bottle and tuck her in bed as soon as the Lord would let him. The loving daughter offered aid and sympathy, but was firmly repulsed. Therefore she joined the able seaman who piloted her to a quiet corner where the lights were not too glaring.

"You poor boy," said she with a caressing intonation which made his fond heart flutter. "Waiting alone while I frivoled with broiled lobster and steamed clams! Had I but known! And I am simply crazy to hear all about everything. Has the 'hunch' come true? I haven't discovered a solitary thing excepting a lonesome feeling when the *Golden Rod* goes to sea."

"I call that very important," returned Howard. "The first time you have noticed it, too. Has the Kline person been playing around with you?"

"Now and then. He doesn't seem to dislike me. But he has been very much tied up with his work. He comes up the hill about six o'clock and goes to his room soon after dinner."

"He told me that he had been nowhere else," the young man reflected aloud.

"I am quite sure of it," exclaimed Barbara Downes. "Last evening, I know, two of his foremen came up for a consultation. I was in the office when the clerk sent them up to his room."

The sailor smiled enjoyably. With the air of a conspirator he whispered in the girl's ear:

"He went out last night, when he was supposed to be in bed, and drove his car forty miles."

Barbara gasped. Her eyes sparkled and she clutched Glennan's sleeve as she implored:

"Tell me, quick. But you were off in the *Golden Rod*. Who saw him leave the hotel?"

Nobody, so far as I know. But I am ready to swear that he made a trip to Snell's Landing."

"But, Howard, there is nothing at Snell's Landing except the wharf and the sardine factory."

"Mr. Guy Webber Kline was in the sardine factory, Barbara, and he must have stayed some time. Do you know what that smell is? It doesn't stick to you if you just walk through the place. But linger an hour or two and, whew! you surely do carry it away with you. My sister worked at Snell's Landing, one summer when she was home from school, and whenever she visited us over Sunday—honestly, soap and water couldn't cure it entirely."

"And are you positive that Mr. Kline was flavored like a sardine? Did you meet him to-night?" giggled Barbara. "He is *so* extremely natty and particular."

"It was just a suggestion of a flavor," explained Glennan. "I didn't get it until after he threw away his cigar. We were in the little parlor with the doors shut. He took a bath and changed his clothes, no doubt, but the factory fragrance got in his hair. That is what it did to my sister, although she kept her head tied up while she was at work. I don't suppose that Mr. Kline noticed it himself."

Miss Downes gravely cogitated, her chin in her hand. The situation was fascinating. They must follow the trail of the sardine no matter where it led them. She had promised to stand watch and watch with Seaman Howard Glennan, U. S. N. R.

"I verily believe you have scented a clew," she declared. "If he sneaked off to Snell's Landing last night, perhaps he will do it again. But you have to go back to the training station. How can I spy on him all by myself? He is very clever, you know."

"I have a nifty little scheme," he replied. "Come with me, child, and I will show you."

He led the way to the hotel garage which was screened in a grove of hemlock behind the hotel. The doors were open and a round-shouldered native in rubber boots was washing Mr. Franklin Downes' big touring car. Barbara halted to pick up a coat which had been left in the tonneau and said to Howard:

"That is Mr. Kline's roadster, behind the post. He has invited me to go out with him, if he ever finds the time."

The man with the hose looked up and grumbled:

"He's derned fussy about that bus of his —locks the switch and keeps the key himself. Afraid I'll swipe it for a joy ride, hey?"

"That is unjust, to suspect a man with such an honest face as yours," sweetly observed Miss Downes. "So Mr. Kline is quite certain that nobody else uses his car?"

Glennan strolled over to the roadster and quickly read the row of figures which indicated the total mileage on the speedometer dial. This was all he cared to know. It was the purpose of his visit to the garage. While they were returning to the hotel he said to Barbara:

"Let me write it down for you—four-seven-three-six. When you come downstairs to-morrow morning, and please make it as early as you can, just run out to the garage and take a slant at the mileage. If it reads forty miles higher, then you will know that Mr. Guy Webber Kline has been joy riding himself, and Snell's Landing is the one best bet."

"And shall I telephone you, Howard, in guarded language?" asked the girl, endeavoring to be calm and collected. "Can't we devise some kind of a code?"

"No, it won't do to sound mysterious when you call up the naval station. Merely tell me that it was a fine night for a ride if you find that there was something doing."

"And if I actually discover the evidence, can I see you to-morrow to discuss what we shall do next?"

"Of course. I shall be on street-patrol duty in the afternoon," answered the bluejacket. "Twirling a club and seeing that my brother gobs mind their manners. If you should happen to drift along India Street about four o'clock we might exchange a few greetings and salutations."

"And you will be running no risk of punishment for neglect of duty, Howard?"

"I should be shirking my first duty if I neglected you," he said, with a twinkle.

A bugle sounded clear and plaintive from the warehouses down beside the river and the able seaman sprinted away at top speed, waving his cap as he turned to find the path which descended to the beach. To be logged for overstaying his liberty would subject him to a severe lecture from Miss Barbara Downes, who was even more of a martinet than Ensign Ambrose Walters.

At seven o'clock next morning a yeoman bawled Glennan's name from the executive's office and curtly informed him that a dame wanted him on the phone. Once was all right, but he mustn't make a habit of it. Save the chatter until you could spill it into her ear direct, advised the conscientious yeoman. Glennan turned crimson, was jeered by the ribald comrades of his own division, and hastened to close the door of the booth behind him.

"Good morning, Mr. Glennan," spoke the darling accents of Miss Downes, who seemed to be laboring under a stress of excitement. "It—it was a perfectly splendid night for motoring. I drove forty-one and three-tenth miles. What's that? Yes, he did—I mean—I did, of course, and will you be on India Street at four o'clock, surely? I have an inspiration, simply gorgeous. Good-by."

Glennan retreated from the booth, mopped his brow, and almost jumped out of his canvas gaiters when the yeoman growled at a stripling recruit who stood rigidly at attention beside the desk:

"*Sardines,* you poor simp. *Sardines.* Get me? This order calls for six cases of 'em, and you lugged four boxes of pickled tongues aboard the ship. Can't you read?

Recovering from this nervous shock, Glennan was about to report for general inspection when a friend offered him a copy of the *Spring Haven Beacon,* with the latest news of the war. There was a lull on the fighting fronts, and no reports of naval activity in the war zone, so he turned to the local items. Hastily running his eye down the columns he came to this paragraph which caused him to halt in his tracks and forget the inspecting officer:

NEW YORK CAPITAL ACQUIRES COAST FISHERIES.

A Maine charter has been granted to a million-dollar corporation which will do business under the name of The Eastern Fisheries Company. It is proposed to combine several of the sardine-canning factories under one management in order to install more efficient methods and to shift labor as it may be needed. For the last two seasons the sardine plants of the Maine coast have earned scanty profits and at least two of them have been shut down indefinitely. It is probable that the supply of Norwegian and French sardines will be cut off during the war and the prices of the domestic product will sharply advance. The factory at Snell's Landing has started up under the new management, with a fair run of fish reported.

New York money and enterprise are behind this company which deserves every success.

Howard Glennan's first conclusion was that Mr. Guy Webber Kline had been called into consultation by the new management. Perhaps they intended rebuilding the cannery at Snell's Landing or erecting a better plant. This was plausible, and yet it seemed to have a flaw. The construction engineer would not be making these trips in the dead of night, nor would he cover his tracks by lying about it. He had declared that his work in Spring Haven prevented him from leaving town in any direction, even to motor along the shore. And he had driven his roadster forty miles on two successive nights. In Howard Glennan's opinion the behavior of Mr. Guy Webber Kline was by no means as clear as sunlight.

It was a long, long day until four o'clock, when Glennan stood at a corner of India Street, swinging his short truncheon and paying little heed to the Spring Haven girls who passed in winsome procession. They appeared to have errands of importance, and it was noteworthy that the streets near the water front had become amazingly popular with the arrival of the spruce young bluejackets of the coast patrol and the training station.

Miss Barbara Downes was so very different from all other girls, of course, that Glennan espied her as soon as she rounded a bend of the ancient thoroughfare. Fearful of interfering with his duty, she approached with some trepidation. When on patrol he suggested to her law and order and court-martials and what not. He might be capable even of placing her under arrest. His beaming face was reassuring, however, and he wheeled to walk abreast of her. There was a quieter stretch beyond, where India Street opened into a square, and she waited until this refuge was gained before she exclaimed:

"Howard Glennan, I have made up my mind what to do, and you must not try to argue me out of it. Have you seen the morning paper? I have an intuition that that Mr. Kline and the new owners of the sardine factory at Snell's Landing are hatching something."

"That sounds like Cap'n Wesley Amazeen," laughed the sailor. "You can smell trouble before it happens."

"So can you," she retorted, with an air of pride. "That is precisely what you did in the little parlor at the hotel. Now, you are tied hand and foot by the navy routine and you will have to go to sea in the *Golden Rod*. Our suspicions are too flimsy to be reported to your officers. You and I must manage this affair between us, somehow, and I have determined to apply for a position in that sardine factory."

Glennan's dismay made him speechless, but a navy man should be quick to act in any emergency and he rallied to say, with masterful authority:

"You will do nothing of the kind, Miss Downes. Your fond parents wouldn't stand for it. And I am very sure that I won't."

The voice of Barbara was no less resolute as she replied:

"I shall say nothing to the fond but interfering parents. A school friend of mine, Mary Betts, has a cottage on an island near Snell's Landing. She has been begging me to visit her. In war one has to resort to strategy."

"But a sardine factory is no place for you," persisted the young man, "and there is the risk of being caught at it by this Guy Webber Kline or his pals."

"If your sister could do it, I guess I can survive. And Mr. Kline will not come in the daytime. It *is* quite heroic of me, for the idea of—of suggesting a sardine—of having my hair perfumed with it, is positively frightful."

"Well, it's not a permanent affliction, and a shampoo helps some," consoled Glennan. "I can't compel obedience, but for Heaven's sake forget it. Let me talk it over with you —— Whew! here comes Ensign Ambrose Walters. I'm very sorry but you had better beat it. He is fussy at times."

Miss Downes departed hastily as if threatened by the iron hand of naval discipline. The tall ensign halted as the able seaman smartly saluted, and a smile was on the serious visage as he dryly remarked:

"The ladies lose their way, I presume, Glennan, and stop to inquire the name of the street. If they annoy you I'll detail a bodyguard."

"Yes, sir. Thank you," soberly replied the sailor. "They can't help showing a friendly spirit in a man's own town."

"Um-m, sorry to tear you away from the social whirl, but the ship is ordered to sea to-night. The *Mermaid*—142—has broken down and we shall have to make her trip as an extra run. Report aboard at seven o'clock."

"Aye, sir. That means a week at sea."

"Something like it. I shall take a smaller crew than usual so as to give us more elbow-room."

This cruise of the *Golden Rod* turned out to be singularly uneventful and she was homeward bound, five days later, when Ensign Walters was pained to discover that a leak in the gasoline tank had flooded the bilges and threatened to blow his fearless man-of-war to kingdom come. The inflammable stuff was pumped overside with gingerly caution, and the machinist's mate managed to find and plug the hole where the tank had rusted. There was an unexpected shortage of fuel, however, and no port convenient for taking on a supply. The commander scowled at the chart and said to the man at the wheel:

"We can't possibly fetch Spring Haven, and these islands hereabouts are not likely to have fuel to sell by the barrel. It means a straight run for the coast and the nearest town."

"There is Jonesboro, but we can't get into the wharf at low water, sir," suggested Howard Glennan. His heart beat faster as he glanced at the chart and added: "Snell's Landing is only six miles farther than Jonesboro and you are sure to find plenty of gas. A tank barge will come alongside and connect a hose."

"Make it Snell's Landing, then, and cut the corners, before the motors lie down and die."

The *Golden Rod* kicked along at ten knots with no disquieting symptoms until she was nearing the last point of coast beyond which lay the snug harbor of Snell's Landing. Then the speed slackened, there was a series of hectic "pop-pops" in the engine room, and the machinist's mate poked his head through the hatch to announce that she'd sucked up the last drop of juice and nobody ought to expect her to run without it. Mr. Walters rubbed his nose, swore in a subdued, dignified manner, and told the boatswain's mate to let go the anchor. It was obvious that a boat could be lowered and sent in to Snell's Landing to bring back enough gasoline in cans to carry the vessel thither. This the ensign promptly decided to do, and Howard Glennan was so eager to be selected as one of the boat's crew that he was fairly underfoot. After colliding with him twice, Mr. Walters snorted:

"Gangway there, or I'll tie a fender around your neck. Jump in and take an oar. You have been in the port before and know your way about."

The boatswain's mate went in charge. He was a relic of the old navy, ruddy and bald and fat, too near the retiring age to be sent overseas, but a useful man for training young recruits. It was his duty, said he, to put the fear of God in 'em, and cure 'em of the sufferin' delusion that they knew it all. To be condemned to such a bathtub as the *Golden Rod,* he, Mike Fessenden, who had cruised around the globe in a battle wagon, was galling to the soul, but he endured it for the glory and honor of the service. He was fond of young Glennan because he was a sailor born, not one of those ready-made gobs from the corn belt who didn't know a serving mallet from a martingale.

Grumbling at the ragged oarsmanship, old Mike steered the boat clear of the surf on the point and rounded a red buoy. The harbor disclosed itself as a basin almost rimmed by rocky slopes, a tidal pool sheltered from the sea with a channel deep and narrow winding to the weedy wharves. Fishing sloops and power dories jostled each other or were hauled out on the strip of white beach in front of a few small dwellings, gray, low-roofed, and wind-blown. From the village, a mile inland, the white spire of a New England meetinghouse lifted austerely against the sky.

Built out over the water was the sardine cannery, a long shed with many open windows. Moored beside the pier at the outer end of the shed were two small steamers, stanch vessels with a bold sheer, the brown nets neatly piled on deck. One of them had come in with a cargo of fish, for the big dippers were scooping them out of the holds and dumping them in the cars at the cannery door.

The navy boat's crew pulled over to the anchored hulk of a schooner which displayed a signboard, "Gasoline," and left the cans to be filled. Mike Fessenden was reminded that the cook had besought him to find some fresh haddock for supper, and perhaps there was a drop of cider ashore which it was not unlawful to sell to a man in uniform. Therefore the boat moved toward the nearest wharf, where it was left in charge of a freckled apprentice seaman whom Mike heartily disliked and never favored if it could be helped.

"I will have a squint at the sardine shop,

for I have never investigated one of 'em meself," observed the boatswain's mate. "'Tis a crime to torment an honest man with the smell of 'em, for they belong with a plate of cheese, a loaf of rye bread, and a dozen bottles of cold beer—'specially the beer."

Howard Glennan joined him while the others explored the beach. The canning shed was clean and airy but richly flavored. The rows of machines were tended by women who filled and sealed the cans with magical swiftness and dexterity. These seemed to flow in shining torrents to the bins in which they were stacked, labeled, and boxed. These ingenious processes had no interest, however, for a trim young able seaman who had descried at a table in one of the aisles a slender, energetic girl wearing a white cap and a long oilcloth apron. Glennan hesitated to disclose his presence to Barbara Downes, yet he was tremendously anxious to learn the story of her courageous adventure. It was Mike Fessenden who decided the matter. Mistaking the lad's motive for hanging back, he hoarsely whispered:

"Bashful, is it? I'm ashamed of you. Come along now. We will give 'em a treat. Nice girls they are and good lookers amongst 'em. How tender they are to the little fishes boiled in oil. Pipe the black-eyed one: I saw you takin' a slant at her just now—the girl by the fifth window countin' from this end. A flower she is, and what an elegant air she has. I will ask her how the sardines do be feelin' to-day."

"Oh, forget it, Mike. We must be getting back to the boat," earnestly objected the seaman.

The amiable argument attracted attention. The sight of the navy uniform was thrilling. The girls clapped their hands and waved handkerchiefs. Barbara Downes turned from her table, saw Glennan in the doorway, and her lovely color glowed more vivid as a recognition signal. She would have resumed her task, but just then the factory whistle blew, the hum of machinery ceased, and the girls were given a breathing spell until the next run of fish should come from the cooking kettles. Gallant old Mike Fessenden lost not a moment, and was rattling off compliments to half a dozen girls who flocked to find the breeze on the wharf.

Barbara Downes slipped out alone, through a side door, and sought the road which rambled off inland. Howard Glennan ran to overtake her, while the boatswain's mate, a man of vast experience, sagely shook his head and concluded that these young people should be left to themselves for a minute or so. He himself would seek those fresh haddock for supper and so acquire merit with the ship's cook.

"Well, I disobeyed your orders, Howard," cried Barbara Downes, with such a happy sigh of relief at this glimpse of her friend and partner. "And I don't mind the work at all. Where is the *Golden Rod* and what are you doing here?"

"The frigate is in the offing and I'm ashore on an errand," he explained. "Great luck! Sure your game is safe, are you? I have lost a lot of sleep worrying about you."

"I can fancy you tossing in your hammock, Howard—for about six minutes after you turn in—a strong man's anguish and all that. Please don't pile it on. I presume I must talk in a hurry or you will be stranded ashore as a deserter. Oh, I don't know where to begin."

"Then you have been finding out a few things?"

"Guessing, mostly. This sardine factory has a new manager, and he is a German, I am quite positive, although his name is Boardman. He urges the girls to buy Liberty Bonds and is violently loyal, to hear him tell it, but there is a trace of an accent, a suggestion in his manner. I spent a year in Leipsic, and perhaps I am more sensitive to such impressions."

"I believe you," said Glennan. "And have you been able to watch Kline at all?"

"I stole out at night, twice, and rowed in a skiff, very quietly, to the factory pier. Mr. Kline came once, for I saw a car in the road by the little beach, but I didn't dare go ashore."

"And he met this Boardman swine, of course?"

"I imagine so, Howard. I saw two men go aboard one of the sardine steamers. They may have belonged to the crew, but it was after midnight, and I think Mr. Kline was one of them. There is something else, but I am so afraid you will be rash and get in trouble——"

"That's what the navy is for—to hunt trouble," was the logical statement of Seaman Glennan.

"But this is rather personal," declared

Barbara, with some reluctance. "The captain of the larger sardine boat is an impossible person. We all dislike him. He is a Dane, I believe, or so he says. His vanity is absurd—no woman can resist him and all that—and he has been annoying the girls in the factory."

"Has he bothered you?" fiercely demanded her champion.

"Not seriously, but he has said some silly things to me, and hangs about and stares. And he has insisted on walking with me once or twice, but now I wait for some of the other girls. It does no good to complain to the manager. They are on intimate terms."

"What does he look like?" inquired Glennan in tones meant to be calm.

"He is a big, bullying person with a reddish mustache and a deep voice. He walks with a swagger, and glowers at his men. They seem to be in terror of him. His name is Captain Axel Johnson. None of the natives seems to know much about him."

"Another bad egg in the basket!" cried Glennan. "Honestly, Barbara, this is no place for you. Chuck it and go back to Spring Haven, won't you? You have done enough. I'll have this precious outfit watched."

She was gazing, not at him but at the road toward the village, and her eyes were startled and a little frightened. Glennan turned and saw approaching a burly figure which he assumed to be the truculent Captain Axel Johnson of the sardine boat. Barbara laid a hand upon her young sailor's sleeve as though to warn and restrain him. With florid gallantry, the Danish mariner swept his hat from his head and bowed as he said:

"Ah, the beautiful Miss Downes! Good afternoon to you, and a fair slant of weather for me because I have the pleasure of escorting you to the boarding house."

Glennan was ignored. He seemed boyish and slight beside this big-boned, hard-fisted seafarer, but he instantly cleared for action. The odds had never daunted a Glennan. Stepping briskly between the girl and Captain Axel Johnson, he confronted the latter as he exclaimed: "Miss Downes is with me, and you are a nuisance to both of us, you lubberly squarehead. And you are to keep clear from now on, understand?"

The Dane laughed with a tolerant good humor that was insulting beyond words. He had been drinking. The evidence was unmistakable. Gripping Glennan's shoulder with a hard, hairy hand, he thrust him to one side and said:

"Because he wears navy clothes, the boy talks big words, eh, Miss Downes? He must not meddle with a man's business. I will have to learn him. Nobody starts arguments with Captain Axel Johnson."

This declaration was unwarranted by the facts, for he had undoubtedly started something. Young Glennan may not have forgotten those lectures on the theory and practice of naval strategy as delivered by Ensign Ambrose Walters. At any rate, he was quick to size up the situation. He was no pugilist to whip a man far outmatching him in weight, strength, and fighting experience, and he sensibly foresaw a hopeless encounter, but he had no intention of letting this domineering brute go unpunished. Against an enemy with a heavier broadside, the trick was to board him if possible.

A quick glance and the angry bluejacket spied a three-foot bit of scantling by the roadside. He leaped for it like a cat, and was dancing back while Captain Axel Johnson still laughed at him. The contemptuous grin faded swiftly. It gave way to a look of consternation as Glennan swung his bludgeon. There was no chance to parry or dodge. The scantling smote the swaggering mariner just above the right ear and the sound was like the crack of a pistol. He sat down abruptly, a hand to his head, and the blood began to trickle through his fingers. The scantling flew into several pieces, but Glennan had no more need of it.

Poor Barbara Downes wrung her hands and wailed, but not in sympathy for the fallen bully:

"Oh, Howard, what if you have fractured his skull and killed him? Will they hang you to the yardarm?"

"Crack that head? It's solid wood above the ears," very cheerily answered Glennan. "Nothing but a belaying pin could dent it. Now if the beautiful Miss Downes will permit me to escort her, we'll get under way. Farewell, Captain Axel Johnson. Big words are unhealthy for you. Better cut 'em out."

The terrible Dane still sat in the road and glared with a dazed expression. It was to be inferred that his wits had been considerably scrambled. He was tenderly caressing the welt above the right ear which, no doubt, seemed to have the dimensions of

a coconut. It was Seaman Howard Glennan who now walked with a bit of a swagger, and he had offered his arm to the lovely creature at his side. There came to their ears the shrill, petulant summons of a boatswain's pipe and the dauntless bluejacket exclaimed, in something like dismay:

"Good gracious, that's old Mike Fessenden, and I've kept the boat waiting."

"Then there is one man in the world whom you are afraid of?" was Barbara's flattering comment.

"Surest thing you know. He will skin me alive. But I can't leave you here, Barbara, and you are not to work another day in the sardine dump."

"Because of Captain Axel Johnson, Howard?"

"Precisely. He is the sort of dog that will try to get square. Are you really staying in a village boarding house?"

"Yes, for a few days, so as to stand watch and watch with you, as I promised. But I can go out to the island to-night and stay with my friend Mary Betts. And you don't have to worry another minute about me, for the Betts launch is at Snell's Landing right now. I saw it come into the harbor. Leave me at the wharf as we go by and I will jump into the launch."

"Fine and dandy," replied Glennan as they hastened to the beach. "And there will be something doing to-night. The *Golden Rod* is handy, and I have decided to put the proposition up to Mr. Walters, my commanding officer."

"It doesn't look as flimsy as it did, Howard?" she queried anxiously. "Do you really think I have been of service?"

"You have discovered that this bunch of outlaws needs serious attention," declared he. "And the navy is due to draw cards."

Their parting was accelerated by the stentorian voice of old Mike Fessenden who had returned to his boat. He conveyed the impression to the harborside that young Glennan was a loafing swab who should be strung up by the thumbs. To Barbara Downes this fat tyrant of a boatswain's mate seemed almost as formidable as Captain Axel Johnson, and she feared that Howard had jumped from the frying pan into the fire, but he carelessly assured her that Mike's bark was worse than his bite and he was really a bully old shellback. She was safely aboard the launch a moment later, and Glennan saw it shove off before the *Golden Rod's* boat had passed beyond the point.

He found Ensign Walters fidgeting on deck and anxious to get the ship under way, but after a brief interview the commander invited the able seaman into his cabin and bolted the door. They talked at length and the *Golden Rod* still rode at anchor. The legal mind of the ensign was accustomed to weigh evidence with a shrewd and cautious deliberation, but in this instance he was also a fighting sailor and ready to act as his own judge and jury. Glennan's story won his respectful attention. He interrupted to say:

"This Guy Webber Kline is a smooth bird, and I doubt if we can implicate him. That isn't really our business. The department of justice will attend to his case. But this lot of thugs at Snell's Landing—well, I think we had better send an armed boat ashore to-night."

"To reconnoiter, sir?" eagerly exclaimed Glennan. "The *Golden Rod* can hide behind one of the islands. She need not run in at all. We have gasoline to go to Jonesboro at half tide and fill the tanks. Then we can loaf back this way after dark."

"The idea, precisely. Did you hit this Captain Axel Johnson hard enough to put him out of commission? Will he be on the job to-night, do you think?"

"Yes, sir. I jolted him some, but if there's business on hand he will be on deck. The scantling busted when it landed on his bean, but I didn't have time to look for anything heavier to soak him with."

"You seemed to have behaved with skill and promptness in the face of a superior force," replied the ensign, with his dry smile. "Was there anything to indicate that his steamer might proceed to sea to-night?"

"She has had a four days' lay in port, sir, and the sardine works needs more fish. One of the boys in our boat scraped acquaintance with the engineer, who told him they had put all the coal and stores aboard."

"And your opinion is that this hard nut of a Danish skipper and the swine of a cannery manager, Boardman, are taking orders from Guy Webber Kline?"

"All tarred with the same brush, sir. Axel Johnson a Dane? Not much. I'll bet a month's pay that he hails from over the Rhine."

"The bet sounds good to me," said Ensign Walters. "Er—I shall take charge of

the landing party to-night and leave the ship with the bos'n's mate. You had better go along with me as a guide."

"We can go ashore at the point," suggested Glennan, "and leave the boat there. I know the path through the pines. If Kline comes for a conference he will turn up around midnight. They will meet him in the factory or aboard Axel Johnson's steamer."

"Probably. We had better arrive too soon than too late. I shall call the boat away at ten o'clock."

Unseen from Snell's Landing, the *Golden Rod* presently moved down the coast at easy speed and slipped into the small bay at Jonesboro. Ensign Walters strolled ashore and found the telephone operator who was on duty in the local exchange. In response to his courteous instructions that zealously loyal young woman assured him that no messages indicating the movements of the *Golden Rod* would be allowed to go through to Snell's Landing or Spring Haven. When he returned to his dashing man-of-war, Mike Fessenden was ready to cast off and stand out to sea.

Besides the ensign and Howard Glennan, there were four seamen in the boat which stole shoreward at ten o'clock. The night was quite dark with an overcast sky and a light breeze. The *Golden Rod* was ordered to lie close to the nearest island until midnight, with all lights screened, and then return to the point. In the event of trouble ashore, a red rocket would be the landing party's signal for reënforcements and the vessel would then make for the harbor. You may be sure that all these fine young sailors were thrilled with honest delight when cutlasses and pistols were actually served out.

Glennan led the boat's crew over the bowlders and along the gloomy path which climbed the hills to Snell's Landing. They went warily, but no precautions had been taken against such a visit as this. From the slope which overlooked the tidal basin they saw no lights in the fishermen's cottages by the strip of beach, and the long cannery shed and wharf were black and silent. In one of the sardine steamers, however, the cabin windows glimmered and a lantern glowed on deck like a firefly. Ensign Walters sent two of his men to patrol the village road, and bade the others follow him. Near the cannery two more were detached to watch the exits from the building and the wharf. The ensign took Glennan with him, and they fetched a stealthy circuit in search of Mr. Guy Webber Kline's roadster. So far as they were able to discover, he had not arrived.

"The only way to get out to the end of the wharf is through the cannery shed," announced Glennan, after vanishing for a brief tour. "And the building is locked up tight. Breaking into it will make the dickens of a racket. The steamer that is all lit up is Cap'n Axel Johnson's. She is in the outside berth. And they are getting steam on her. See the sparks whirling out of her funnel?"

"You can swim, I presume? How's the tide?" suggested the plucky ensign.

"High water, and there's fifteen feet at the outer end of the wharf. I can swim like a duck, but the water is some cold."

"I am no Annette Kellermann, but I guess I can make it, Glennan. Any way to climb up after we get there?"

"A ladder. That's all right. And we can stow ourselves behind the piles of sardine cases, within a few feet of the steamer. You are a good sport, Mr. Walters."

"I am pleased to hear you say so," gravely answered the ensign as he removed his blouse. "Such an adventure as this is genuinely entertaining."

They kicked off their shoes, stuck the automatic pistols in their trousers pockets and waded into the water which lapped the beach beside the long shed. The teeth of Ensign Walters were chattering violently as he advanced, for his physique might have been called "skinny," but there was no hesitation. Keeping close to the pilings of the wharf so that they were safely screened from above, they felt the water deepen until it was necessary to swim or paddle with infinite pains in order to avoid splashing. Groping from one slippery timber or splintered plank to the next, Glennan served as pilot until his fingers clutched the ladder which led upward to the wharf. He hauled himself out and lent a hand to the ensign who was almost benumbed and exhausted. He had never tried to swim as far in his life. The judgment of the *Golden Rod's* crew concerning Mr. Ambrose J. Walters was correct. He would stand the gaff.

Undiscovered, these amphibious pilgrims doubled themselves behind the stuff heaped on the wharf and shivered, but not with fear. They tried to interpret the sounds which

came from the lighted steamer. The crew was awake and moving about. Glennan nudged the ensign at recognizing the heavy voice of Captain Axel Johnson, who was in a surly temper. He cursed a man and threatened to knock him down. In the midst of his oaths he let slip a foreign phrase or two and Mr. Walters whispered:

"How careless! That language was made in Germany."

Glennan chuckled and raised his head to look at the steamer which was only a few yards distant. The darkness obscured him. A lantern moved on the foredeck, casting a shadowy circle of illumination. It revealed the black square of an open hatch and a swinging derrick boom. The captain was bending over the hatch, giving orders to men at work in the hold below. Glennan stiffened like a pointer dog. That derrick boom had been rigged since afternoon. It was designed to handle some kind of heavy cargo, not for the regular business of a sardine boat.

A man came out of the cannery shed and swung himself aboard the steamer. He was a stranger to Glennan, but looked unlike a mariner or fisherman and might have been the manager, Boardman. The captain greeted him with a certain deference, and they presently went into the cabin. The foredeck was deserted for the moment and Ensign Walters was about to sneak aboard on the chance of eavesdropping, but Glennan detained him.

"Steady as you are, if you please, sir. I thought I heard the hum of a motor—coming from the village. It may be Kline. Will it do any harm to wait a little?"

"Right-o! This is big stuff, and I don't want to queer it."

"I think I am getting wise to their game, sir. Never mind. I'll explain later."

The wind had freshened from the land, but it failed to bring the sound of a motor and it seemed likely that Guy Webber Kline had left his car at some distance from the harbor. The two seamen who patrolled the road had been told to remain unseen and to permit any stranger to pass, if he were bound toward the landing. Let him enter the trap and then spring it. Time dragged interminably while the dripping adventurers crouched in their hiding place and awaited the turn of events. At length a figure flitted rapidly from the shed and descended to the steamer with light-footed agility. Without pausing he crossed the deck and entered the cabin. One glimpse was enough to identify the dapper, capable engineer who was so absorbed in construction work that he could not possibly leave Spring Haven.

Ensign Walters was elated but perplexed. It was essential that he should get information of the secret conference which he felt certain was a criminal conspiracy of some sort, but his first notion of concealing himself aboard the steamer seemed unwise. The risk of detection was too great. To bungle was to spoil the show. He could return ashore or send Glennan to summon the other men and rush the steamer in the hope of finding documents or other evidence in the cabin. This would be a high-handed procedure for a naval officer, and unless he could prove his case the consequences might be serious.

While he wrestled with the problem, the lantern was picked up from the steamer's foredeck and disappeared down the open hatch. Young Glennan, quick-witted and reckless, perceived an opportunity. It might offer a way out of the dilemma.

"You and I can't raid the party, sir," he murmured. "The whole crew would pile on us. They're roughnecks, every man of 'em. Let me take a look into that hold. They can't see me from below."

The ensign nodded assent. He had found Glennan level-headed for his years, and this was his personally conducted affair, in a way. The youngster dodged from behind the barrier of boxes and chain cable and wriggled over the stringpiece of the wharf. Wrapping an arm around the steamer's jack staff, he slid to the deck and his bare feet pattered to the coaming of the hatch. Safely shrouded in gloom, he peered down into what should have been an empty hold. There was cargo in it, however, and two lanterns shed light enough for Glennan to conclude that Captain Axel Johnson's steamer was not solely interested in sardines. He suppressed an exclamation and fled for the wharf no more than an instant before the cabin door opened and the three men came out of it. They moved forward to the open hatch, gazed into it, and the captain ordered his sailors out of the hold. The cover was clapped on and bolted down, after which Mr. Guy Webber Kline glanced over several papers, appeared to checkmark them with a pencil, replaced them in an envelope, and returned it to Captain Axel Johnson. There

was a ceremonious handshake during which both of them bowed stiffly from the waist, and Mr. Kline said in guarded tones:

"Good luck to you, captain. *Auf wiedersehen.* A quick voyage and plenty of sardines, eh?"

Ensign Walters was no longer perplexed. He told Glennan to make for the shore and endeavor to reach the two seamen guarding the road before Kline was held up by them. They were to let him pass unmolested and then make for the path to their own boat at the double-quick.

"The government may wish to give Kline some more rope," he rapidly explained, "and I don't propose to gum the cards. There is more to it than this one sardine factory, unless I guess wrong."

"And we look after this steamer," hopefully replied Glennan. "If I mix it up with that bucko skipper I'll hit him with something hard."

Expeditiously the ensign followed to round up his men and put them aboard the *Golden Rod* in all possible haste. He had very little to say, but the feeling was strong that this night's work might have a livelier finish. They raced along the dusky path, tumbled over the bowlders and were short of breath when they laid hold of the gunwales and dragged the boat down the shingle into the gentle surf. The oars jumped into the tholepins and five sturdy backs surged into it as the keel floated clear. The ensign was unwilling to show a signal rocket although he feared the *Golden Rod* might fail to find him. And he was desperately anxious to be heading seaward before the sardine steamer moved out of the harbor. Mike Fessenden was a vigilant shipkeeper, however, and as the boat's crew paused to listen they heard the muffled beat of the *Golden Rod's* motors off to starboard as she moved on the appointed course between the island and the coastwise point. The ensign showed him one flash from a pocket light and the patrol vessel swung over to pick up her boat.

Glennan darted into the wheelhouse and studied the chart. Success or failure hung upon his skill and judgment as a navigator and pilot. It was to be a blind game of hide and seek. The tide had turned at the flood and he could take the *Golden Rod* through the short cut of Parlin Thoroughfare by feeling his way. This would avoid following the steamer out in the main channel and so diminish the chance of detection.

"But how do we know he intends to go out past Thorpe's Island light?" demanded Ensign Walters. "He may turn to the north'ard and then you lose him. I should say to stick to his trail."

"And let him hear us coming, sir? If he knows he is watched it's all off with any of his queer tricks. He will drift along and put his nets out and give us the laugh."

"Well, it is your dope," reasonably admitted the commander. "And I guess you will have to go to it. But if you draw a blank and it's all a false alarm I shall give you particular and unqualified Hades."

"Hell to pay and no pitch hot," observed Glennan, "but I hope to help you give Fritz a doze of it between now and daylight."

The *Golden Rod* withdrew in a coy and shrinking manner from the fairway between the islands and drifted silently until the running lights of the sardine boat came into view outside the harbor. She was a powerfully engined craft and apparently had no time to waste on this trip. Snoring along at a good twelve knots she swung to pick up the range lights for the easterly course and the open sea. Glennan's mind was easier. There was no danger of losing her if he went through Parlin Thoroughfare. Deftly he steered for the entrance while Ensign Walters evolved strategy and tactics. He had sailed with fewer men than usual and if it came to close quarters his crew would be outnumbered at least two to one. However, this was a trifling detail. In his favor was the spirit and discipline of the United States navy, not to mention the popgun mounted in the bow. It was his shrewd conjecture that the ship's company of Captain Axel Johnson had been selected for something else than their experience in harvesting sardines.

An hour later this impetuous little dreadnought emerged from the short cut without knocking her bottom out or stranding high and dry. In other circumstances Glennan would have thought it lunacy to attempt the passage at night, but now he had to get on with the war and if a man expected to play it safe he had better stay ashore. Again the *Golden Rod* stopped her motors and drifted with the ebbing tide. Soon the steamer's lights passed a mile away and she was bound out by Thorpe's Island, beyond any doubt.

Now the patrol boat was compelled to follow but no lights betrayed her position. The wind favored her for it was almost ahead

and the muffled beat of the exhaust was carried astern. For two hours the chase continued and the sardine boat was drawing steadily away until her masthead light was no more than a faint spark.

"I'll find her again," Glennan confidently assured Ensign Walters. "If she slows up later, we don't want to run too close. She may douse her lights at any time, sir."

"And then it's a needle in a haystack," grumbled the other.

Glennan glanced at the compass and then at the sets of cross-bearings which he had marked in pencil on the chart. He thought he knew where to find the sardine boat in case she eluded him. Thorpe's Island light gleamed like a star, ten miles to seaward, when Captain Axel Johnson's steamer became suddenly invisible. The masthead lamp had been extinguished. The vessel was utterly blotted out in the night.

"That settles it," cried Glennan. "Now we know what she is up to."

"Very suspicious," agreed the ensign. "I am justified in firing a shot across her bows and boarding her for examination."

"We'll catch her in the act, sir, if you approve. I want to steer inshore, close to Thorpe's Island, until we pick up the red sector."

"Ah, ha! And then work out along the edge of it," cried the ensign, with unwonted excitement. "I get you, my boy. Very stupid of me for scolding you last trip when you were rehearsing this nautical cakewalk. But I didn't understand, of course."

The *Golden Rod* went her own way, regardless of her quarry. Slowly she crept toward Thorpe's Island until the brilliant light shifted and the paths of white and ruby radiance were sharply defined. Then the patrol boat turned and carefully advanced with no more than steerage way, noiseless, invisible. Mile after mile she moved in this manner and passed the first set of cross-bearings without sighting the steamer. Glennan's faith was unshaken. He would find the vessel at the other intersection, where the red sector crossed the light from the revolving lenses of the Sow and Pigs.

The crew of the patrol boat comprehended that young Glennan was not groping at random on this darkened sea. They were taut and ready for whatever might befall and for the first time they vividly realized that the war zone began on their own side of the Atlantic. Far out from the islands the *Golden Rod* moved like a shadow, until the light on Thorpe's Island had dropped almost to the horizon and the red sector was fading. Then she halted to listen. There was no sound of a steamer's engines but faint and clear came the musical creak of ropes running through blocks. Glennan leaned from the wheelhouse window and said to Ensign Walters:

"A derrick boom, sir, unless a schooner is trimming sheets dead ahead."

"Hold her as she is, then. If it is a derrick boom, Captain Axel Johnson is hoisting something out of the for'ard hold."

The gun crew went to stations in the bow of the *Golden Rod*. Again they heard the whine of sheaves in their pulley blocks, and then the splash of some large and weighty object.

"Caught with the goods!" cried the ensign. "You win, Glennan. Full speed ahead and all hands stand by to board. If they resist, treat 'em rough, boys."

The *Golden Rod* churned a foaming wake as she shot forward, regardless of the roaring song of the motors. Presently the shape of a vessel loomed vague and black no more than a few hundred feet distant. Ensign Walters switched on the searchlight and the sardine boat was revealed in brilliant detail, picked out against the curtain of night like a motion picture on a screen. Some of her men were grouped around the forward hatch and the rigging of the derrick boom dangled above their heads. The burly figure of Captain Axel Johnson was conspicuous. Two other men were in a skiff which floated a short distance from the steamer. In the stern sheets were several bits of wood painted white with coils of line attached, such as are used to buoy lobster pots.

For an instant all activity ceased. Bedazzled and amazed, this pirate crew was bound by a spell. It was broken by a bellowing uproar from Captain Axel Johnson who leaped for his wheelhouse and jerked the bell pull to signal the engine room. The jingling alarm carried to the *Golden Rod* whose commander was aware that the steamer was about to forge ahead. Her bow was aimed straight for the fragile patrol boat, as it happened, and the tall prow, steel-shod and ponderous, was gathering a menacing momentum.

"By God, he means to run us down," said Ensign Ambrose Walters, quite unemotionally. "Left rudder, Glennan, and half speed.

I shall have to call his bluff, the big counterfeit."

The steamer also veered, not to pass clear, but to meet the maneuver and compel a collision. It appeared to be her skipper's intention to drown the patrol boat with all hands as a desperate hope of escape. In the glare of their own searchlight he could see the bluejackets poised at the gun in the bow. There was no mistaking the *Golden Rod* for a merchant vessel.

"Slow her down," yelled Ensign Walters, "and make fast when she bumps. Then follow me."

He was unwilling to rake the steamer with shell at point-blank range. It was too much like murder, and he had yet to prove that this was an enemy vessel engaged in outlawed traffic. He would offer a chance of surrender. His plan was to come up alongside, which would have been feasible if the steamer had remained motionless or even fled from him. But she was lunging straight at him and the lanky ensign was in no temper to dodge and run.

Young Glennan needed no more advice. As a helmsman he was pitting his nerve and skill against the bogus Dane.

The two vessels met in a glancing impact which shook the *Golden Rod* as though she had rammed a cliff. The steamer's bow thrust her aside and then they swung locked together, for the ensign was over the bulwark in a flash and the bight of line in his fist was tossed over the hawser bitts. At his heels was old Mike Fessenden with a dory anchor as a grapple. The *Golden Rod* had listed as the water gushed in through her dented and broken plates. The machinist's mate scrambled up to join the boarding party, announcing that the tin warship was filling like a basket and in his opinion she was out of luck.

This was a matter of trifling importance. History had taught Ensign Ambrose J. Walters that if your vessel was sunk under you the trick was to capture one from the enemy and transfer your flag. There was nothing to suggest a rising young lawyer as he pranced into the thick of the steamer's crew with his bluejackets massed behind him. They were fighting with fists and clubs, in honest Anglo-Saxon fashion, until Captain Axel Johnson wrenched free of the mass and emptied an automatic into the struggling groups. It was a sort of berserk rage, for he wounded one of his own men besides two bluejackets who staggered to a cleared space to stanch the blood.

Ensign Walters could see no reason for gentle measures. He forbade his men to shoot but he hammered his way nearer the bloodthirsty skipper and deliberately put a bullet through his shoulder. The courage of Captain Axel Johnson was not of the stubbornly heroic kind. The ensign was standing over him, declaring that he would kill him unless he yelled "Kamerad." Sullenly the bully dropped his own pistol and became a noncombatant. Several of his men were of tougher metal and they fought tenaciously, but the boarding party held together like a well-drilled team and shoved ahead foot by foot.

Driven against the forward deck house, the roughnecks were compelled to scatter and then their cause was lost. Mike Fessenden wielded a short length of lead pipe with a loop in one end, and for a fat man bowed down with years he inflicted an amazing amount of damage. It was he who suggested kicking the rascals into the open hatch as fast as they weakened, which procedure disposed of the prisoners with methodical promptitude. Having cleared the decks after a series of bruising tussles, the crew of the *Golden Rod* took stock of its wounds and bruises. Painful but not serious, was the verdict of Ensign Walters who now found time to look for the *Golden Rod*. The indomitable patrol boat had vanished from the surface of the sea.

"An excellent finish," observed the ensign. "I shall be court-martialed for losing her, but this has been a gorgeous night."

He then swung a lantern into the forward hatch to inspect his bag of prisoners, excepting Captain Axel Johnson who had been locked in his own cabin with the steamer's cook as nurse and surgeon. The ensign surveyed them with evident pleasure and earnestly damned them for dirty traitors and Huns who had sold their souls for wages. What interested even more was the sight of several great steel drums or barrels of at least three hundred gallons capacity. They were upended in a row and chocked with plank to prevent sliding in a seaway.

"Ah—gentlemen of the jury," chortled Ensign Walters. "The evidence is in your hands. The navy rests its case. Crude oil—fuel for submarines—and, let me see—they had already hoisted out two drums of it and sunk them to the bottom. Glennan,

ahoy! Come a-running. This is deucedly clever, don't you know. Buying control of Maine sardine factories in order to use the steamers for their hellish purpose. If you hadn't been such a bright young Johnny-on-the-spot, this game might have been carried on for months."

"I had a partner, sir," and Glennan blushed in the dark. "She—that is to say—my partner did most of it."

"Do you mind introducing me? I should consider it a distinguished honor. By the way, how much water is there where the sardine boat was dropping the oil drums overboard?"

"Not more than sixty feet, sir. It is on the Little John Bank. A diver can explore the bottom easily enough and make fast to those drums."

"By Jove, we forgot those two pirates in the skiff, with the bunch of lobster-pot buoys. They were marking the spot, eh?"

"Of course, sir. A German submarine could run in at night and pick up her ranges by the lights, and then find the lobster buoys at daylight. Then she could submerge until the next night, sit on the bottom, and come up to put a diver over and let him make fast to the drums and hook them up."

"We had better put after that skiff," observed the ensign. "Does a boat of this sort carry a searchlight?"

"Usually, for setting and hauling nets on clear nights if the fish are running close at hand."

"Then it's up to the machinist's mate to get way on this captured cruiser."

They picked up the skiff and the two disconsolate pirates after a brief hunt. Under threat of punishment they admitted having set two buoys, at which Ensign Walters became so jubilant as to impair his dignity. He had only to wait for daybreak, make certain that the spot was accurately designated, and then steam for Spring Haven with his booty and his captives. A report to the rear admiral commanding the naval district and the chapter would be handsomely finished. Mr. Walters was a bit uncertain in his mind, whether he would be praised or censured, but he unselfishly rejoiced that his acting navigator, Able Seaman Howard Glennan, was bound to acquire merit and reward.

"The admiral may be annoyed to find that the *Golden Rod* is stricken off the active list," he said to himself, "but it has always been esteemed a difficult task to make an omelet without breaking eggs."

Two days later the admiral himself was in a gunboat at anchor on Little John Bank, with the tall shaft of Thorpe's Island light lifting like a slender wand against the sky line. Guided by the white bits of wood which floated as buoys and seemed to mark the presence of innocent lobster pots, a navy diver prowled on the sandy bottom until he was able to slip a sling around a great steel drum. When this was hoisted aboard the gunboat he made fast to another drum, and the navy acquired without further cost six hundred gallons of fuel oil.

No more than a week had passed when Ensign Ambrose J. Walters received formal notification that he had been promoted to the rank of lieutenant, junior grade, and would be assigned to staff duty at the admiral's headquarters until after the court of inquiry on the loss of the *Golden Rod*, patrol boat. It was hinted unofficially that he might expect a larger vessel later in the year.

Seaman Glennan was at the training station in Spring Haven when the admiral came to inspect the construction work of the new buildings. Mr. Guy Webber Kline was not there to receive him. Another engineer had replaced him. Glennan wondered at this, and vainly sought information. It remained a mystery until the admiral sent for this young able seaman and eyed him quizzically from beneath heavy, gray brows. Glennan was rather appalled to face such a great man, but he stood at attention and held his chin up.

"If you had one wish, what would it be?" inquired the admiral, with a fatherly smile.

"Overseas duty, sir, in anything that floats," rapped out the youth.

"Granted. You are letting me off easy. A destroyer preferred?"

"Yes, sir. I dream of it. That is all in the world I want."

"Perhaps you had better go as a petty officer. Could you stand as much happiness as that?"

"Well, I think I can carry it without busting, sir. I am a thousand times obliged and I——"

"The obligation is quite the other way, Glennan. You are very curious to know something about Kline—the man you suspected because he was flavored like a sardine. The firm which employed him was

misled and deceived. They are wholly guiltless. Ahem—Mr. Kline is safely taken care of. He has been removed beyond the jurisdiction of the navy. However, if he ever attempts more mischief, I shall expect you to pick up his trail. Perhaps it is well to ask no more questions about that fishy gentleman."

When Glennan climbed the headland to say good-by to Barbara Downes before he sailed for Queenstown in a newly commissioned destroyer, he had something vastly important to tell her, but lacked the courage to say it. There was provocation enough when she exclaimed, as they met:

"Is this the end of the partnership, Howard? I thought we did awfully well at it."

"There is a wide, wet ocean to put between us," he dolefully returned.

"And I thought destroyer men were so audacious!" she murmured.

"I'm not broken in yet," was the lame excuse. He was conscious of his wretched cowardice.

Miss Barbara Downes regarded him intently for a moment, laughed, and suggested:

"Will you please come into the little parlor with me—the room where you waited with Mr. Kline?"

He followed meekly and was tongue-tied until they were in front of the fireplace and the door was closed. Then Barbara commanded, with profound earnestness:

"Tell me the truth, Howard Glennan, and don't you dare fib. Sniff my hair and see if you find any trace of the flavor of sardines."

Dutifully he bent over her, and her face was turned up to his and very near it. Her dusky hair held its own fragrance, and he was about to declare as much, but instead of this he kissed her on the lips. It was logical and unavoidable, and required no explanation.

"There!" said Barbara Downes. "I am glad to know you realize, Petty Officer Glennan, that the navy expects every man to do his duty."

The next story in this series is entitled "On a Lee Shore," and will appear in the POPULAR for Feb. 7. Also, Mr. Paine is writing for us a novel of the navy, and we expect to give it to you before very long

WITHSTANDING WILD ADVICE

A POLITICIAN close to the president gives this explanation of why some of those who take new ideas and schemes to Mr. Wilson come away with the opinion that he is a cold and unsympathetic listener:

The president tries always to remember that it is invariably a temptation to the listener to yield to the enthusiasm of the talker. Enthusiasm is contagious, and, without the accompaniment of logic, easily leads one astray. Naturally, the talker knows and presents all the merits, none of the weaknesses, of his scheme. Therefore, it is the duty of the listener to be asking himself continually in the course of the talker's remarks: "Why should I agree with this without analyzing it more thoroughly? If this scheme is as good as he says it is, why hasn't it been adopted long ago? What facts can I advance to contradict what he brings forward on his side?"

Mr. Wilson assumes that every man who gives him advice is sincere; but he knows that there are sincere fools as well as sincere wise men. He tries, consequently, to be influenced by nothing but the cold, hard facts. This may be one reason why he asks nearly everybody to present plans, estimates, arguments and proposed reforms in writing, so that he can consider them in the quiet of his study.

With Rope and Ring

By Charles A. Bonfils
Author of "On the Square," Etc.

Judgment is too often passed before we know the particulars in a case, and we readily forget our own misdeeds in the presence of another's offense. In casting a stone at a sinner you are more than likely to be hitting at a target that ought to be yourself

"DERE two more dem cowmen, Mr. Dal."

Pedro Martinez, in charge of Dalhart's summer sheep camp in the Storm River Mountains, pointed a bony brown finger across the treetops toward the wide Mexican flats.

From the top of the tall ridge where they stood, the green forest at their feet like a billowing lawn, the wide gray dobe flat lay spread out before them toward the east like a map.

Dalhart, standing with his small gray eyes fixed on the northern horizon, turned and gazed steadily where the foreman pointed.

"Yep, that's right," he agreed. "That makes four more; ten altogether. There's a couple more comin' down from the north side of the flat. Guess they're part of the Owl Creek outfit."

The foreman wrinkled up his eyes and stared steadily to the north. It was several seconds before he could make out the two figures Dalhart's keen eyes had seen, two infinitesimal black dots rising and falling rhythmically, like gnats, against a slowly rising gray column of dobe dust.

"Them two fellers coming from the east must be some of the Cow Creek men," Dalhart went on, turning in that direction. "Probably Big Thompson and some of his riders." Dalhart stared at them steadily, fingering his short red beard.

"When did you see the first of them fellers, Pete?" he asked the foreman.

" 'Bout four-t'orty, five 'clock," the foreman answered. "Wath comin' down de hill from Pablo camp; thee two, t'ree come, ronnin' horses like hell croth de flat."

"That shore looks like a getherin' of the clans," Dalhart remarked. "An' whenever you see Big Thompson ridin', you kin know that there's trouble afoot, er rather a-horseback. Likely enough it's ridin' double with Big Thompson, too. He's gittin' too fat to set a horse now without it's somethin' special; leaves ordinary things to his men." He glanced again at the men, galloping tirelessly across the great flat.

"Looks like they're headin' fer the mouth of Cow Creek Cañon, Pete." The foreman nodded.

"An' that means one of two things. They're after us, er after that young Alf Arnold. He's took up a claim on Cow Creek, jest above the mouth of the cañon, makin' a pretense of ranchin' an' raisin' horses. Maybe he's got his brands a little mixed, an' this is a surprise party fer him—necktie an' sichlike. But if it ain't him, it's us. You ain't let them sheep stray acrost our lines have you?" Dalhart demanded, turning suddenly on the foreman.

"None dem sheeps gone acroth de line, Meester Dal," the Mexican assured Dalhart earnestly. "I wath tell all de herder instil dey go acroth de line, dey keep de sheeps two t'ree hoonderd yard eenside."

"Well, it must be some devilment of Arnold's then," Dalhart replied. "Whenever you see a lot of cattlemen gittin' together early in the mornin' this-a-way, you feel like somethin's goin' to happen. They ain't out fer a picnic. An' a sheepman's always got to look out a little even if he's shore they ain't after him. I guess we'd better git a-movin'."

With his usual energetic stride, he set off down the slope of the ridge, his silver-inlaid spurs clinking and jingling against the heels of his expensive alligator hide boots. Big Dal loved the luxuries of this earth, and

with the profits from half a dozen bands of sheep, and a rapidly growing investment in cattle, was well able to have them.

A short distance down the slope of the ridge there was a windowless log hut, as rough as the den of a grizzly bear; Dalhart's summer "headquarters." In front of it, their bridle reins dragging, grazed two saddled horses, Dalhart's big black and the foreman's lean bay. Without pausing, Dalhart ducked his head and entered the cabin, returning a few moments later with a holstered rifle, and his huge black six-gun. He belted the big pistol around his waist and buckled the rifle, the butt to the front, on the saddle, so that it rode under his left leg. Already the foreman had looked carefully after his own weapons.

"Pete, I guess you'd better ride back and see that everything is all right with the sheep," Dalhart ordered his foreman. "I'll take a little jaunt over on Cow Creek and see what these fellers are up to."

A shade of disappointment passed over the foreman's face. He had hoped to go with Dalhart; but he replied "All ri', Meester Dal," and mounted his horse as Dalhart swung up on his big black and started down the slope, following a little path that led north through the forest.

A wild, unsettled region, mostly Indian lands, was the Storm River country; a domain of high, rugged mountains, rising from sagebrush flats and plains; of green valleys encroached upon by skirts of greener forests spreading down the mountainsides; of rushing rivers and fathomless small lakes, placid and cold; of turbulent small streams and sky-piercing, needlelike peaks, unmapped and unnamed. There was scarcely even a fence within fifty miles of Dalhart's rough summer headquarters.

A part of the year it was thinly tenanted. During the short summers flock masters grazed their bands of ewes and lambs on the high slopes of the mountains; among the low hills were half a dozen cow camps, widely scattered, each occupied by its quota of two or three cowboys who kept watch over the cattle, ranging over the lower slopes. The rival interests were kept from clashing by virtue of leases, but their animosity only slept like a slumbering fire.

With the coming of fall the sheepmen trailed their bands out; the cowmen with much galloping and hallooing rounded up their herds and drove them down onto the plains. And the great tract went back to the primitive. For nine months—during the long winter and the stormy spring—mountains, forest and valley would be given back to roving bands of mountain sheep and herds of deer and elk. In the loneliness and isolation of the Storm River country men, too, reverted to the primitive, and the ancient code of law. They met man to man; each was judge of his own wrong, each the author of his own redress. Six-guns settled most misunderstandings; rope many transgressions.

And the whispering green forests answered no questions and told no tales. The all-seeing needlelike peaks wrapped themselves in clouds and reverberated to the darting lightning with rolling thunder, but made no charges nor accusations. What had been a man might swing high between heaven and earth until it fell to pieces, unseen by any eyes save those of eagle or mountain jay; or lie prone in the brown dust on a gaunt ridge until the winds and sun mummified it, and none draw near except the bright-eyed coney, curing his winter's hay among the rocks.

For an hour the big black horse followed the trail—a cowpath—traveling at a ground-devouring, running walk; then Dalhart checked him and got off, dropping the bridle reins, and went forward a short distance on foot. Cautiously he made his way down a little hillside, well screened by trees and bushes, until he came to an aisle through which he could overlook the narrow valley of Cow Creek, sodden, overgrown with dense patches of black willows. On the other side of it, at the verge of the forest, a new log cabin with flat mud roof—Alfred Arnold's effort at home-making—stood forth in the glaring sun. A short distance from the cabin was a small high corral of heavy logs where Arnold broke his horses and schooled them. Now only his saddle horse was in it.

The cabin door was closed, as though some one or something was shut up within.

A group of three or four men—cattlemen, judging from their "chaps," big hats, and spurred boots—stood near a corner of the cabin. They were armed and wore well-filled cartridge belts, and were talking seriously. Half a dozen saddled horses, their heads down, their flanks caked with dried dobe dust and sweat, as though they had been ridden far and hard, stood about, fighting the flies.

As Dalhart watched, a cowman came to the door of the cabin and looked expectantly toward the little cañon through which Cow Creek quit the narrowing little valley and found its way out to the plains. He exchanged a few words with the men outside and went in again, closing the door carefully behind him. From the air of the men it was evident to Dalhart that they had taken possession of young Arnold's cabin and no doubt of Arnold himself, and were waiting only for the arrival of the men whom he had seen riding across the flats to take some decisive action. A few moments later he heard the clatter of hoofs in the short little cañon, and the four riders led by Big Thompson himself, came into view.

Standing stiff in the stirrups, leaning far forward, his big arms flapping, Big Thompson led the way at a gallop across the short open between the cañon and the cabin. He swung himself heavily out of the saddle, clasping the pommel with both hands, and with a bellowed "Hello, boys," which reached even Dalhart, he lumbered toward the cabin, trailing his elephantine legs. He pushed the door open without ceremony. Evidently he was the leader of whatever was afoot. Quite as evidently this concerned Arnold, probably held now under guard in his cabin; certainly it seemed no affair of Dalhart's. But without a moment's hesitation he returned to his horse, serious, hurried, and started at a trot down the hillside in the direction of Arnold's cabin.

The horse found a squidgy path among the willows to a ford across the creek, and thence a miry track across the valley. Dalhart allowed the horse to pick his way, and rode up with a casual "Howdy, fellers," to the men outside the cabin, who nodded to him, coldly suspicious.

Whether or not Dalhart intended, single-handed, to interfere in what was going forward, or whether he had any plan, his smiling face did not show. He was not wanted, for he had not been informed as to what was to take place, and it was a dangerous and a delicate affair to attempt to meddle in. He was shown this immediately, if he had not known before. As he got down from his horse Big Thompson threw open the door and confronted him.

"You ain't needed here, Dalhart," he burst out, dropping his hand on the butt of his pistol and advancing threateningly. "This is a private party an' you ain't invited. You git back on that hoss an' hit the back trail."

Dalhart's keen face hardened under the scraggy red beard. Thompson had unintentionally given him an opening, which he was quick to see. By dropping his hand to his pistol, as though he himself would enforce his order, the self-appointed spokesman had made it a personal affair. Dalhart had never liked the hectoring, trouble-making Thompson. He believed him a coward at heart, despite his size and bluster. Whatever crime Arnold might be guilty of, he was sure that under Thompson's leadership it would be punished beyond his deserts. He accepted the challenge in a way to make it a personal matter, and stepped forward to meet Thompson.

Fully as tall as the cattleman, he was lean, sinewy, tough, where the other was grossly big and fat. His small, hard gray eyes met Thompson's round, muddy ones on a level, unflinchingly.

"When'd you git the notion, Thompson, that you could tell me where I was wanted and where I wasn't?" Dalhart demanded. "So fer as you're concerned personally, I kin shake a purty lively foot at any fandango you're runnin'."

He dropped his hand on the butt of his big black pistol and waited. It was up to Thompson to take action or back down; he had made it a personal matter with Dalhart, and could not appeal to his companions. And on their part they recognized it as a man-to-man affair to be settled according to Western code, and they made no move to interfere. Besides, they liked and respected Dalhart, natural enemy though he was.

But Thompson, wise in the way of quarrels, and gifted with an acute understanding of men, neither made the expected move, nor backed down. For a moment or two he stood motionless, staring back at Dalhart. Apparently he was on the point of drawing the gun he was grasping; and if he had seen any hint of wavering in his opponent's face he would have shot. But he found no sign of uncertainty there. So he chose another course.

"You declar' yo'se'f in on this party, do you?" he demanded belligerently.

"So fer as you personally kin keep me out, you bet I do," Dalhart replied emphatically.

"Well, so fer as I'm personally concerned,

you kin come inter it, then," Thompson answered, as if washing his hands of the matter. "But, by gosh, you got to stay till it's finished an' take the same responsibility as the rest of us fer what we do." He stepped back, dropping his hand to his side.

"I'm willing to take responsibility fer anything I git into, and some things other folks gits me into too," Dalhart replied, grinning.

One or two of the men outside the cabin answered his friendly grimace with smiles, and the incident was over.

"What's the party about, anyhow?" Dalhart asked.

"Never you mind; you jest wait out here with the rest of the men," Thompson ordered. "You'll find out time enough."

Dalhart joined the group of men standing near the cabin, and waited. Most of them he knew—cattlemen and ranchers from the Cow Creek and Owl Creek Valleys.

They offered no information and Dalhart asked no questions. But one of them, a cowboy from Big Thompson's ranch, held in his hand a rawhide reata taken from his saddle, and played with the noose meaningly, enlarging it and again drawing it tight against the hondo, as if testing it. After a few minutes Big Thompson threw back the door and came out, followed by two men, with Alf Arnold, bareheaded and coatless, between them. They held the boy by the arms, though his elbows were bound tightly together behind his back. Behind them filed out three or four other men, looking solemn and oppressed.

It was a pathetically small procession, but deeply significant. One of the ranchers carried his hat in his hand, as if he were walking behind a man already dead. Led by Thompson and the man with the rope they went into the near-by forest, the men on the outside of the cabin dropping in behind. The procession stopped and spread out in an open spot before a big pine tree with level, heavy lower branches. Then Big Thompson spoke, breaking the ominous silence.

"Men, I s'pose they ain't much use in tellin' you what we air here fer," he began. "All of you has been told by the men I sent out er somebody else, what the trouble is an' what we air a mind to do—that is all except one man, an' as he butted inter this when he wasn't asked to, and hit was none of his business in the fust place, I don't know's he's entitled to know." He fixed his round eyes upon Dalhart. "He's already said he'd take his sheer of the responsibility."

Dalhart immediately stepped out from the rough semicircle the men had formed.

"What Thompson says is right, men," he spoke up deliberately. "I did butt into this little party without an invite; and I did say I was responsible for anything I butted into, an' some things other folks butted me into. But that ain't no reason why the charges agin' this boy shouldn't be made clear, nor why he shouldn't have a chanct to make his plea before all of us. If we're going to pull the rope on him—and it looks like we are—we'd oughta hear him. Even Judge Lynch always gives a man a hearin', however short he makes the trial."

There was a brief murmur of assent from the crowd, and the foreman of the Owl Creek outfit spoke up.

"Seems to me, Thompson, that we can take a few minutes' time to hear the charges made against him," he advised. "Let him defend himself if he's got a defense."

"All right, gentlemen, ef that's yore will," Thompson acceded. "Let it be so. I'm satisfied. The facts of the matter air that this man here, Alfred Arnold by name, has ben a-stealin' hosses off'n all the outfits around here—an' cattle, too—fer the last year an' a half; even sence he taken up this here claim, in fact. We've all knowed hit, 'cause we've all lost hosses off'n this range, an' cattle, too." He looked around the circle, and several nodded approval. "But nobody has ever ben able to ketch him at his tricks," he went on. "Last night, though, two of my men lookin' fer a bunch of my cattle that had strayed off'n the range, run onto this man Arnold nearly forty miles west of here, drivin' a band of hosses out of the country. They was all kinds of brands in the bunch 'cept his'n. They was that ole red Di'mond-L hoss of mine, that you all know, an' the big roan. They was three Re-verse 4 hosses in the band, an' half a dozen belongin' to you Owl Creek fellers, an' purty nigh twenty belongin' down on Cow Creek. He didn't own a single one of 'em.

"He didn't have a chanct to run, my men come upon him so suddent. An' he as good as admitted to stealin' 'em an' was intendin' to drive 'em off an' peddle 'em through the country, on up west. So my men brought him here, an' one of 'em rode down to tell

me, an' I sent the word around. Also I sent another of my boys over to bring back the hosses, ef they ain't a-comin' back theyselves. That's the facts agin' this man; an' in my experience hit's always meant hangin', an' hangin's the quickest an' easiest way, without foolin' round with courts. Whatever the prisoner has to say, he kin state now."

The prisoner, a ghastly attempt at a smile twisting his freckled, boyish face, said that "he guessed he hadn't nothing to say."

Dalhart broke the silence that followed.

"Men, we'd ought to give this boy some sort of a trial," he urged. "The evidence agin' him looks purty bad; enough to convince anybody; but fer our own sake we'd ought to see that he gits justice an' more. Hangin' a man is serious business."

One or two of the men smiled and nodded.

"I want to make a proposition to you," Dalhart went on. "Suppose all you men but I and Thompson set as jury, and let's have a trial of this boy. I'll be his lawyer an' let Thompson there be the prosecutor. An' whatever verdict you men bring in, I'll agree to, and if asked I'll help pull the rope on him. What do you say?"

It was a novel suggestion, and caught the fancy of the men, already feeling the suspense, and the prisoner's refusal to make any plea for himself. Two or three replied that it looked fair. Only Big Thompson was against the proposal.

"Looky here, men, I ain't a-persecutin' nobody," he objected angrily. "An' I don't want it so understood. This boy was ketched stealin' hosses—yore hosses an' mine. An' I ain't got no more intrust in his payin' the penalty fer it than you have. You kin hang him er turn him loose as suits you; an' I promise I'll pertect myself in the future. Ef ever he's caught monkeyin' round on my range ag'in, they'll be no argyment. They'll be action an' plenty of it," he concluded, hotly.

"For one, I'm willing to listen to Dalhart if he can find anything to say for him," the foreman of the Owl Creek men spoke up. "Providing he cuts it short."

Several others were agreed on the same terms. Relieved for the moment of the suspense, some of them sat down cross-legged, others squatted on their heels, with an air half amused, half serious. Even the skeptical Owl Creek foreman unbent and digging his high heels into the soft earth, leaned in uncertain comfort against a convenient tree. Big Thompson, as if considering the whole proceeding a reflection on himself, withdrew a few steps, red and angry. The prisoner was left alone, practically unguarded.

"I'd like to have a few words alone with my client," grinned Dalhart. "It's a way us lawyers has."

He questioned the boy earnestly, in an undertone, the boy replying aloud in monosyllables. When they had finished the boy was ordered to sit down, one of the Cow Creek men volunteering to keep an eye on him. Then his self-appointed advocate sitting cross-legged before his jury began his fight for the boy's life.

"Men, I ain't got any argument to make for this boy," he began. "I'm only goin' to tell you a story—a true one, that happened to me. Then, whatever your verdict is, it's mine too. That's our agreement. An' I'll make the story as short as I know how.

"In the first place, I know all you men, an' I guess you all know me. I come to this State when she was a Territory, along with and in company of the sheep. I guess they's no use trying to conceal that part of my history from you, for you know it on me anyway. I might as well admit now that I trailed 'em through from Oregon before they was any sheep to speak of, or at all, in this country. It was all cattle country. And as us men with trail flocks didn't pay no taxes we could avoid, and wasn't particular whose ground we grazed on, being here one day and gone the next, and as we cleaned up the feed like locusts as we went along, none of us was what you might call popular. And I believe I used to have the scrubbiest, mangiest outfit that ever come along the trail. There was only me and two other men with my sheep, and sometimes just me and one herder, usually a Mexican. I was camp mover and spied out the trail ahead and looked after the pack horses and cooked and done a few other things, while the herder just done the herdin'. Believe me, I was a busy man, and I don't mind tellin' you that a side-winder rattlesnake coulda won a popularity contest with me anywhere along the trail.

"Whenever a cattleman met me he just shot hell out of my outfit, what they was of it, and told me afterward how long I was going to stay in the neighborhood and where

I was to head for. It was a gay and uncertain life, but I lived through it.

"Well, once upon a day, when I was afoot through old Juan, my herder, pretendin' to have hurt his ankle and havin' to herd on horseback, me not having any extra horses, I was up in the foothills in some purty lonesome country, tryin' to spy out some new range. Any new range for sheep had to be in purty lonesome country. Well, I was comin' down a steep hillside, where there was plenty of underbrush, and I heard a horse comin' at a dead gallop down the hill, with a terrible bustin' of brush and kickin' of rocks, an' I just withdrawed a little to see whether it was somebody else er me that he was huntin'. You know some cattlemen are mighty touchy on this range question."

The jury smiled at this sally at their expense, and Dalhart proceeded:

"Anyhow, I got a point of vantage and I kept a sharp lookout, with my hand on my gun. And purty soon I see a man come into sight, chasin' a calf, and the calf was dodging back and forth like a rabbit, and behind the two came old Ma Cow, bawling and anxious. Well, I knowed that man; also I knowed it wasn't branding round-up season by no means. And I was considerable interested to know what was going to happen to all of 'em. So I just waited till they'd went a-ballyhooin' down the hill and I follered after. When I next got sight of 'em they was all out in a little open place in the brush, and the man was ready with rope an' ring, gentlemen, to put a brand on that calf.

"Ma Cow was as interested an' as anxious a spectator as I was myself standin' right there clost, and I got a good chance to see the man. I was shore of him; and he was a man that had showed no sheepman any particular mercy, so far as I had heard. Well, I just squatted down there in the brush, my hand on my gun, and waited until he had finished the job. An' then I drawed my gun and started to rise up. For, gentlemen, the brand that man put on the calf was not the brand the cow was wearin' by a long jump. And I'd made up my mind to get even with one cattleman in my life if it was the last thing I ever done. I'd made up my mind to take that man an' turn him over to his own kind to be treated as they treated cattle thieves in them days. As I started up, a stick broke under my foot, an' I stood still and waited. I could see this man, but he couldn't see me.

"He jumped up, grabbing for his gun, his face getting white as paper. Gentlemen, if ever you saw the fear of death come on a man's face, you know it's a terrible sight. He thought he was caught, caught in the act; and he knowed it meant death. For twenty seconds he stood there shakin' like a leaf, his hand wabbling so he couldn't 'a' drawed his gun if I'd stepped right out in front of him. Then as nothing happened, he took a long breath, kinda laughed, foolishlike, thinkin' it wasn't anything, and finished the job. Then he hit the middle of his horse and took out after that old cow to drive her clean out of the country away from the calf. And gentlemen, I let him go. The look on that man's face was too much for me. The fear and horror that had come into it had made me see what I was about to do, and I just squatted down again, and let him get away."

Dalhart paused, and picking up a fallen branch of pine, began digging into the soft ground with it, and there was an audible relaxation among his hearers.

"Gentlemen," he began again suddenly, "every man here knows that man. And every man here knows who that man is. He is to-day a highly respectable member of this community. A man of family, a man of standing; a man who has rose to comfort if not to wealth. And he has the confidence of every man that knows him, and every one of you knows just who I mean."

He paused in his digging and looked at each man before him in turn. And each as he looked whitened under his tan, grew an angry red, and clutched his pistol butt. Even the Owl Creek foreman, a newcomer in the district, felt constrained under the steady gaze of Dalhart's sharp eye to shift his long legs and seek a more comfortable position, and Thompson even started to speak, but checked himself.

"Which was better, gentlemen," Dalhart asked, "to let that man go to become a good, law-abiding citizen, as I done, or to turn him over to be hung, as he shorely would of been if I had took him? I want every one of you to ask yourself that. And now, gentlemen," he continued, rising, "you'll ask what has all this got to do with hangin' Alf Arnold. Why, just this," Dalhart stooped over the sitting men and shook his finger at them. "Take a good look at him. Look

at them bearskin chaps; cost him fifty dollars if they cost a cent. Look at that nice pink silk shirt, and them blue sleeve holders with rosettes. Look at them tan boots, all scrolled up with stitching, and them silver spurs of hisn. Did you ever dress like that? They ain't a one of you that ain't if you'll remember back when you was flying around among the girls, and going to every bronchobustin' contest and every Fourth of July celebration you could get to. And every one of you had on hats big enough so that you and your gal could both ride under if it come on to rain. They ain't a man among you that ain't in his time dressed just like Alf Arnold as he is to-day, and it was when you was kids—just like he is now.

"Now gentlemen, Alf Arnold is guilty. He stole them horses and he was drivin' them out of the country. And he meant to sell 'em and put the money in his pocket an' go to every dern bronchobustin' an' every fandango an' every celebration, an' every gamblin' hall and saloon dance he could get to.

"And when he'd got it out of his system, and run acrost the right kinda gal, he'd 'a' settled down somewheres and become a respectable member of the community. And, now, if you all think I done right—and I know I did—to let that man go twenty years ago, how are you goin' to vote about this boy?"

Before any one could reply Big Thompson strode to the boy's side and with one stroke cut the rope binding his arms.

"That's my vote, men," he said.

"Mine, too."

"Same here," chimed in half a dozen others rising.

"Guess we'd better make it unanimous," said the foreman of the Owl Creek outfit, "and call the tally square up to date." He shook hands with the boy, remarking significantly, "So long, Arnold. Good-by and good luck."

Thompson and the rest of the "jury" followed his lead. And then, in a body, they mounted and galloped away.

As the boy, already started on a new trail to a new country, stopped his horse a moment on the divide to wave his wide-brimmed hat in farewell, Dalhart heard a horse approaching behind him. It was his foreman, Martinez.

"Where'n thunder did you come from, Pete?" Dalhart demanded, surprised.

"From de sheeps; dey all ri', way eenside de line," the Mexican explained. "Tell all de men dey keep lookout. Den ride down Cow Creek Cañon fin' w'at 'come you. T'ot might-a be trovle weed you. Wath een wood up dere een trees."

"You was up there hidin' among the trees while I was givin' 'em that talk, was you?" Dalhart asked, grinning his appreciation.

The Mexican nodded sheepishly.

"Wath good for-a Arnol', Meester Dal, you see dat man rustlin' dat calf. Dose men hang him by de neck, else," he added seriously. "I di'n't could tell dough, de one wath guilty."

"Couldn't tell which one I meant, eh? Well, to tell you the fact, Pete, that was just the point," Dalhart grinned dryly. "I wanted to hit all of 'em that was guilty. You see, all them fellers was old-timers in a way, and in the airly days out here men wasn't so derned particular whose calf they put their brand on. It was kinda the custom to brand everything you come across that wasn't branded; and if it was branded to run your brand over it till nobody could make out what it was and put your own brand on. All you needed to start in the cattle business in them days was a horse and a brandin' iron, and you was a full-fledged cattleman. Why, I knowed two fellers that started with a yoke of oxen and in five years had ten thousand head of cattle. That's breedin' cattle fast."

"You di'd't mean none dem mens?" asked the puzzled Martinez.

"None of 'em—but all of 'em," Dalhart replied. "Jest made up that story outa whole cloth. I was only fishing, an' every dern one of 'em bit."

The Mexican shook his head dubiously, implying that it was a dangerous experiment. They rode on in silence for a while. Dalhart spoke again as they neared the headquarters.

"Yes, sir, they all took the bait, hook, line and sinker, from the foreman of the Owl Creek outfit to old Big Thompson," he went on. "Every one of 'em as good as admitted that in his time he'd used rope an' ring on other men's stock. And now that we've got their numbers, Martinez, and they ain't so likely to make us any trouble, why if the feed looks good outside, I don't think you need to be any too dern careful if the sheep strays a little ways acrost the line."

Mr. Standfast

By John Buchan

Author of "Greenmantle," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

General Hannay has been made a brigadier for gallantry in action when the British war department makes a secret-service agent of him, against his wishes, and sets him on the trail of pro-German agitators. He finds them a peculiar lot, consisting mostly of persons with distorted views who are used by a few clever spies among them. One of the chief of the German agents is living under the name of Ivery, and it is him that Blenkiron, a fellow worker with Brand, and Macgillivray of Scotland Yard, are especially anxious to capture with evidence against him. One of the feminine secret agents for the British is Mary Lamington, whom Brand encounters at various places, and he becomes much interested in her personally. After a time he is sent to Glasgow, engages in a serious fight with soldiers and sailors at a pacifist meeting, escapes, and proceeds to the country district of Skye in the West Highlands, to get evidence. A suspected man named Grosson travels on the same boat along the coast, and he stumbles against Brand in the dark on the slippery deck, and almost knocks him into the sea. While investigating mysterious doings in rural parts, Brand is threatened with arrest, but finally convinces an official that he is a British army captain on leave, and is put up at his house. A son, a wounded soldier, accepts Brand's story when the latter talks familiarly of officers whom the boy knows.

(A Four-Part Story—Part Two)

CHAPTER VI.

THE SKIRTS OF THE COOLIN.

OBVIOUSLY, I must keep away from the railway. If the police were after me in Morvern, that line would be warned, for it was a barrier I must cross if I were to go farther north. I observed from the map that it turned up the coast, and concluded that the place for me to make for was the shore south of that turn, where Heaven might send me some luck in the boat line. For I was pretty certain that every porter and station master on that tin-pot outfit was anxious to make better acquaintance with my humble self.

The distance was greater than I thought, and it was already twilight when I reached the coast. The shore was open and desolate—great banks of pebbles to which straggled alders and hazels from the hillside scrub. But as I marched northward and turned a little point of land I saw before me in a crook of the bay a smoking cottage. And, plodding along by the water's edge, was the bent figure of a man, laden with nets and lobster pots. Also, beached on the shingle, was a boat.

I quickened my pace and overtook the fisherman. He was an old man with a ragged gray beard, and his rig was seaman's boots and a much-darned blue jersey. He was deaf, and did not hear me when I hailed him. When he caught sight of me, he never stopped, though he very solemnly returned my good evening. I fell into step with him, and in his silent company reached the cottage.

He halted before the door and unslung his burdens. The place was a two-roomed building with a roof of thatch, and the walls all grown over with a yellow-flowered creeper. When he had straightened his back, he looked seaward and at the sky as if to prospect the weather. Then he turned on me his gentle, absorbed eyes. "It will haf been a fine day, sir. Wass you seeking the road to anywhere?"

"I was seeking a night's lodging," I said. "I've had a long tramp on the hills, and I'd be glad of a chance of not going farther."

"We will haf no accommodation for a gentleman," he said gravely.

"I can sleep on the floor, if you can give me a blanket and a bite of supper."

"Indeed you will not," and he smiled slowly. "But I will ask the wife. Mary, come here!"

An old woman appeared in answer to his

call, a woman whose face was so old that she seemed like his mother. In highland places one sex ages quicker than the other.

The old folk had the manners of princes. They pressed food on me, and asked me no questions, till for very decency's sake I had to put up a story and give some account of myself.

I found they had a son in the Argylls and a younger boy in the navy. But they seemed disinclined to talk of them or of the war. By a mere accident I hit on the old man's absorbing interest. He was passionate about the land. He had taken part in long-forgotten agitations, and had suffered eviction in some ancient landlords' quarrel farther north. Presently he was pouring out to me all the woes of the crofter—woes that seemed so antediluvian and forgotten that I listened as one would listen to an old song. I tell you it was like sad music on the bagpipes hearing that old fellow. The war and all things modern meant nothing to him, he lived among the tragedies of his youth and his prime.

I'm a Tory myself but a bit of a land reformer, so we agreed well enough. So well, that I got what I wanted without asking for it. I told him I was going to Skye, and he offered to take me over in his boat in the morning.

I told him that after the war every acre of British soil would have to be used for the men that had earned the right to use it. But that did not comfort him. He was not thinking about the land itself, but about the men who had been driven from it fifty years before. His desire was not for reform but for restitution, and that was past the power of any government. I went to bed in the loft in a sad, reflective mood, considering how in speeding our newfangled plows we must break down a multitude of molehills and how desirable and unreplaceable was the life of the moles.

In brisk, shining weather, with a wind from the southeast, we put off next morning. In front was a brown line of low hills, and behind them, a little to the north, that black tooth comb of mountains which I had seen the day before from the Arisaig ridge.

"That is the Coolin," said the fisherman. "It is a bad place where even the deer cannot go. But all the rest of Skye wass the fine land for black cattle."

As we neared the coast, he pointed out many places. When he put me ashore in a sandy bay between green ridges of bracken, he was still harping upon the past. I got him to take a pound—for the boat and not for the night's hospitality, for he would have beaten me with an oar if I had suggested that. The last I saw of him as I turned round the top of the hill, he had still his sail down, and was gazing at the lands which had once been full of human dwellings and now were desolate.

I kept for a while along the ridge, with the Sound of Sleat on my right and beyond it the high hills of Knoydart and Kintail. I was watching for the *Tobermory*, but saw no sign of her. A steamer put out from Mallaig, and there were several drifters crawling up the channel, and once I saw the white ensign and a destroyer bustled northward leaving a cloud of black smoke in her wake. Then, after consulting the map, I struck across country, still keeping the higher ground, but, except at odd minutes, being out of sight of the sea.

So soon as I changed my course I had the Coolin for company. Mountains have always been a craze of mine, and the blackness and mystery of these grim peaks went to my head. I forgot all about Fosse Manor and the Cotswolds. I forgot, too, what had been my chief feeling since I left Glasgow, a sense of the absurdity of my mission. It had all seemed too far-fetched and whimsical. I was running apparently no great personal risk, and I had always the unpleasing fear that Blenkiron might have been too clever and that the whole thing might be a mare's-nest. But that dark mountain mass changed my outlook. I began to have a queer instinct that that was the place, that something might be concealed there, something pretty damnable. I remember I sat on a top for half an hour raking the hills with my glasses. I made out ugly precipices, and glens which lost themselves in primeval blackness. When the sun caught them—for it was a gleamy day—it brought out no colors, only degrees of shade. No mountains I had ever seen—not the Drakensberg or the red kopjes of Damaraland or the cold white peaks around Erzerum—ever looked so unearthly and uncanny.

Oddly enough, too, the sight of them set me thinking about Ivery. There seemed no link between a smooth, sedentary being, dwelling in villas and lecture rooms, and that shaggy tangle of precipices. But I felt there was, for I had begun to realize the

bigness of my opponent. Blenkiron had said that he spun his web wide. That was intelligible enough among the half-baked youth of Bigglesworth, and the pacifist societies, or even the toughs on the Clyde. I could fit him in all right to that picture. But that he should be playing his game among these mysterious black crags, seemed to make him bigger and more desperate, altogether a different kind of proposition. Now he seemed an intimate and omnipresent enemy, intangible, too, as the horror of a haunted house. I got a chill in my spine when I thought of him.

I am ashamed to confess it, but I was also horribly hungry. There was something about the war that made me ravenous, and the less chance of food the worse I got. If I had been in London with twenty restaurants open to me, I should as likely as not have gone off my feed. That was the cussedness of my stomach.

I put up that night in a shepherd's cottage miles from anywhere. The man was called Macmorran, and he had come from Galloway where sheep were booming. He was a very good imitation of a savage, a little fellow with red hair and red eyes, who might have been a Pict. He lived with a daughter who had once been in service in Glasgow, a fat young woman with a face entirely covered with freckles, and a pout of habitual discontent. No wonder, for that cottage was a pretty mean place. It was so thick with peat reek that throat and eyes were always smarting. It was badly built, and must have leaked like a sieve in a storm. The father was a surly fellow, whose conversation was one long growl at the world, the high prices, the difficulty of moving his sheep, the meanness of his master, and the God-forsaken character of Skye.

However, he gave me supper—a braxy ham and oatcake, and I bought the remnants off him for use next day. I did not trust his blankets, so I slept the night by the fire in the ruins of an armchair, and woke at dawn with a foul taste in my mouth. A dip in the burn refreshed me, and after a bowl of porridge I took the road again. For I was anxious to get to some hilltop that looked over to Raasay.

Before midday I was close under the eastern side of the Coolin, on a road which was more like a rockery than a path. Presently I saw a big house ahead of me that looked like an inn, so I struck the road that led to it a little farther north. Then I bore off to the east, and was just beginning to climb a hill which I judged stood between me and the sea, when I heard wheels on the road and looked back.

It was a farmer's gig carrying one man. He was about half a mile off, and something in the cut of his jib seemed familiar. I got my glasses on him and made out a short stout figure clad in a mackintosh with a woolen comforter round his throat. As I watched, it made a movement as if to rub its nose on its sleeve. That was the pet trick of one man I knew. Inconspicuously I slipped through the long heather so as to reach the road ahead of the gig. When I rose like a wraith from the wayside, the horse started, but not the driver.

"So ye're there," said Amos' voice. "I've news for you. The *Tobermory* will be in Raasay by now. She passed Broadford two hours syne. When I saw her, I yoked this beast and came up on the chance of forgathering with ye."

"How on earth did you know I would be here?" I asked in some surprise.

"Oh, I saw the way your mind was worrkin' from your telegram. And says I to mysel'—That man Brand, says I, is not the chiel to be easy stoppit. But I was feared you might be a day late, so I came up the road to hold the fort. Man, I'm glad to see ye. Ye're younger and soopler than me, and yon Gresson's a stirrin' lad."

"There's one thing you've got to do for me," I said. "I can't go into inns and shops, but I can't do without food. I see from the map there's a town about six miles on. Go there and buy me anything that's tinned—biscuits, and tongue and sardines, and a couple of bottles of whisky if you can get them. This may be a lang job; so buy plenty."

"Whaur'll I put them?" was his only question.

We fixed on a cache, a hundred yards from the road, in a place where two ridges of hill inclosed the view so that only a short bit of road was visible. "I'll get back to the Kyle," he told me, "and a'body there kens of Andra Amos, if ye should find a way of sendin' a message or comin' yourself. Oh, and I've got a word to you from a lady that we ken of. She says, the sooner ye're back in Vawnity Fair the better she'll be pleased, always provided ye've got over the Hill Difficulty."

A smile screwed up his old face and he waved his whip in farewell. I interpreted Mary's message as an incitement to speed, but I could not make the pace. That was Gresson's business. I think I was a little nettled, till I cheered myself by another interpretation. She might be anxious for my safety, she might want to see me again, anyhow the mere sending of the message showed I was not forgotten. I was in a pleasant muse as I breasted the hill, keeping discreetly in the cover of the many gullies. At the top I looked down on Raasay and the sea.

There lay the *Tobermory* busy unloading. It would be some time, no doubt, before Gresson could leave. There was no rowboat in the channel yet, and I might have to wait hours. I settled myself snugly between two rocks, where I could not be seen, but from where I had a clear view of sea and shore. But presently I found that I wanted some long heather to make a seat, and I emerged to get some. I had not raised my head for a second when I flopped down again. For I had a neighbor on the hilltop.

He was about two hundred yards off, just reaching the crest, and, unlike me, walking quite openly. His eyes were on Raasay, so he did not notice me, but from my cover I scanned every line of him. He looked an ordinary countryman, wearing badly cut and baggy knickerbockers of the kind that gillies affect. He had a face like a Portuguese Jew, but I had seen that type before among people with Highland names; they might be Jews or not, but they could speak Gaelic. Presently he disappeared. He had followed my example and selected a hiding place.

It was a clear, hot day, but very pleasant in that airy place. Good scents came up from the sea, the heather was warm and fragrant, bees droned about and stray sea gulls swept the ridge with their wings. I took a look now and then toward my neighbor, but he was deep in his hiding hole. Most of the time I kept my glasses on Raasay, and watched the doings of the *Tobermory*. She was tied up at the jetty, but seemed in no hurry to unload. I watched the captain disembark and walk up to a house on the hillside. Then some idlers sauntered down toward her and stood talking and smoking close to her side. The captain returned, and left again. A man with papers in his hand appeared, and a woman with what looked like a telegram. The mate went ashore in his best clothes. Then at last after midday Gresson appeared. He joined the captain at the pier master's office, and presently emerged on the other side of the jetty where some small boats were beached. A man from the *Tobermory* came in answer to his call, a boat was launched, and began to make its way into the channel. Gresson sat in the stern, placidly eating his luncheon.

I watched every detail of that crossing with a faint satisfaction that my forecast was turning out right. About halfway across Gresson took the oars, but soon surrendered them to the *Tobermory* man, and lit a pipe. He got out a pair of binoculars and raked my hillside. I tried to see if my neighbor was making any signal, but all was quiet. Presently the boat was hid from me by the bulge of the hill, and I caught the sound of her scraping on the beach.

Gresson was not a hill walker like my neighbor. It took him the best part of an hour to get to the top, and he reached it at a point not two yards from my hiding place. I could hear by his laboring breath that he was very blown. He walked straight over the crest till he was out of sight of Raasay, and flung himself on the ground. He was now about fifty yards from me, and I made shift to lessen the distance. There was a grassy trench skirting the north side of the hill, deep and thickly overgrown with heather. I wound my way along it till I was about twelve yards from him, where I stuck, owing to the trench dying away. When I peered out of the cover I saw that the other man had joined him and that the idiots were engaged in embracing each other.

I dared not move an inch nearer, and as they talked in a low voice I could hear nothing of what they said. Nothing except one phrase, which the strange man repeated twice, very emphatically.

"To-morrow night," he said, and I noticed that his voice had not the Highland inflection which I looked for.

Gresson nodded and glanced at his watch, and then the two began to move downhill toward the road I had traveled that morning.

I followed as best I could, using a shallow, dry watercourse, of which sheep had made a track, and which kept me well below the level of the moor. It took me down the hill but some distance from the line the pair were taking, and I had to reconnoiter fre-

quently to watch their movements. They were still a quarter of a mile or so from the road, when they stopped and stared, and I stared with them. On that lonely highway travelers were about as rare as road menders, and what caught their eyes was a farmer's gig driven by a thickset elderly man with a woolen comforter round his neck.

I had a bad moment, for I reckoned that if Gresson recognized Amos he might take fright. Perhaps the driver of the gig thought the same, for he appeared to be very drunk. He waved his whip, he jiggeted the reins, and he made an effort to sing. He caught sight of the figures on the hillside, and cried out something. The gig narrowly missed the ditch and then to my relief the horse bolted. Swaying like a ship in a gale, the whole outfit lurched out of sight round the corner of hill, where lay my cache. If Amos could stop the beast and deliver the goods there, he had put up a masterly bit of camouflage.

The two men laughed at the performance, and then they parted. Gresson retraced his steps up the hill. The other man—I called him in my mind the Portuguese Jew—started off at a great pace due west, across the road, and over a big patch of bog toward the northern butt of the Coolin. He had some errand which Gresson knew about, and he was in a hurry to perform it. It was clearly my job to get after him.

I had a rotten afternoon. The fellow covered the moorland miles like a deer, and under the hot August sun I toiled on his track. I had to keep well behind, and as much as possible in cover, in case he looked back; and that meant that when he had passed over a ridge I had to double not to let him get too far ahead, and when we were on an open part I had to make wide circuits to keep hidden. We struck a road which crossed a low pass and skirted the flanks of the mountain, and this we followed till we were on the western side and within sight of the sea. It was gorgeous weather, and out on the blue water I saw cool sails moving and little breezes ruffling the calm, while I was glowing like a furnace. Happily, I was in fair training, and I needed it. The Portuguese Jew must have done a steady six miles an hour over abominable country.

About five o'clock we came to a place where I dared not follow. The road ran flat by the edge of the sea, so that several miles of it were visible. Moreover, the man had begun to look round every few minutes. He was getting near something and wanted to be sure that no one was in his neighborhood. I left the road accordingly and took to the hillside, which to my undoing was one long cascade of tumbled rocks. I saw him drop over a rise which seemed to mark the rim of a little bay into which descended one of the big corries of the mountains. It must have been a good half hour later before I at my greater altitude and with far worse going reached the same rim. I looked into the glen and my man had disappeared.

He could not have crossed it, for the place was wider than I had thought.

But even as I hesitated he appeared again, fording the stream, his face set on the road we had come. Whatever his errand was he had finished it, and was posting back to his master. For a moment I thought I should follow him, but another instinct prevailed. He had not come to this wild place for the scenery. Somewhere down in that glen there was something or somebody that held the key of the mystery. It was my business to stay there till I had unlocked it. Besides, in two hours it would be dark, and I had had enough walking for one day.

I made my way to the streamside and had a long drink. On each side of the stream was turf like a lawn, perhaps a hundred yards wide, and then a tangle of long heather and bowlders right up to the edge of the great rocks. I had never seen a more delectable evening, but I could not enjoy its peace because of my anxiety about the Portuguese Jew. He had not been there more than half an hour, just about long enough for a man to cross from one side of the glen to the other and back. Yet he had found time to do his business. He might have left a letter in some prearranged place—in which case I would stay there till the man it was meant for turned up. Or he might have met some one, though I didn't think that possible.

I ate for supper most of the braxy ham and oatcake I had brought from Macmorran's cottage. It took some self-denial, for I was ferociously hungry, to save a little for breakfast next morning. Then I pulled heather and bracken and made myself a bed in the shelter of a rock which stood on a knoll above the stream. My bedchamber was well hidden, but at the same time, if

anything should appear in the early dawn, it gave me a prospect. With my greatcoat I was perfectly warm and, after smoking two pipes, I fell asleep.

My night's rest was broken. I woke to the first flush of dawn.

The sun was behind the Coolin and the hills were black as ink, but far out in the western seas was a broad band of gold. I got up and went down to the shore. The mouth of the stream was shallow, but as I moved south I came to a place where two small capes inclosed an islet. It must have been a fault in the volcanic rock, for its depth was portentous. I stripped and dived far into its cold abysses, but I did not reach the bottom. I came to the surface rather breathless, and struck out to sea, where I floated on my back and looked at the great rampart of crags. I saw that the place where I had spent the night was only a little oasis of green at the base of one of the grimmest corries the imagination could picture. It was as desert as Damaraland. I noticed, too, how sharply the cliffs rose from the level. There were chimneys and gullies by which a man might have made his way to the summit, but no one of them could have been scaled except by a mountaineer.

I was feeling better now, with all the frowsiness washed out of me, and I dried myself by racing up and down the heather. Then I noticed something. There were marks of human feet at the top of the deep-water inlet—not mine, for they were on the other side. The short turf was bruised and trampled in several places, and there were broken stems of bracken. I thought that some fisherman had probably landed there to stretch his legs.

But that set me thinking of the Portuguese Jew. After breakfasting on my last morsels of food, I set about tracking him from the place where he had first entered the glen. I went back over the road I had come myself to get my bearings, and after a good deal of trouble I found his spoor. It was pretty clear as far as the stream, for he had been walking—or rather running—over ground with many patches of gravel in it. All that I could make out for certain was that he had crossed the stream, and that his business, whatever it was, had been with the few acres of tumbled wilderness below the precipices.

I spent a busy morning there, but found nothing except the skeleton of a sheep picked clean by the ravens. It was a thankless job, and I got very cross over it. I had an ugly feeling that I was on a false scent and wasting my time. I wished to Heaven I had old Peter with me. He could follow spoor like a Bushman, and would have riddled the Portuguese Jew's track out of any jungle on earth. That was a game I had never learned; in old days I had always left it to my natives. I chucked the attempt, and lay disconsolately on a warm patch of grass and smoked and thought about Peter. But my chief reflections were that I had breakfasted at five; that it was now eleven, that I was intolerably hungry, that there was nothing here to feed a grasshopper, and that I should starve unless I got supplies.

It was a long road to my cache, but there were no two ways of it. My only hope was to sit tight in the glen, and it might involve a wait of days. To wait I must have food, and, though it meant relinquishing guard for a matter of six hours, the risk had to be taken. I set off at a brisk pace with a very depressed mind.

From the map it seemed that a short cut lay over a pass in the range. I resolved to take it, and that short cut, like most of its kind, was unblessed by Heaven. I will not dwell upon the discomforts of the journey. But at last I was among the bogs on the east side, and came to the place by the road where I had fixed my cache.

The faithful Amos had not failed me. There were the provisions—a couple of small loaves, a dozen tins and a bottle of whisky. I made the best pack I could of them, slung it on my stick, and started back thinking that I must be very like the picture of Christian on the title-page of my "Pilgrim's Progress."

I was more like Christian before I reached my destination—Christian after he had got up the Hill Difficulty. The morning's walk had been bad, but the afternoon's was worse, for I was in a fever to get back, and, having had enough of the hills, chose the longer route I had followed the previous day. I was mortally afraid of being seen, for I cut a queer figure, so I avoided every stretch of road where I had not a clear view ahead. Many weary detours I made. But I got there at last, and it was almost with a sense of comfort that I flung my pack down beside the stream where I had passed the night.

I ate a good meal, lit my pipe, and fell into the equable mood which follows upon fatigue ended and hunger satisfied. The sun was westering and its light fell upon the rock wall above the place where I had abandoned my search for the spoor. As I gazed at it idly I saw a curious thing. It seemed to be split in two and a shaft of sunlight came through between. There could be no doubt about it. I saw the end of the shaft on the moor beneath, while all the rest lay in shadow. I rubbed my eyes, and got out my glasses. Then I saw the explanation. There was a rock tower close against the face of the main precipice and indistinguishable from it to any one looking direct at the face. Only when the sun fell on it obliquely could it be discovered. And between the tower and the cliff there must be a substantial hollow.

The discovery brought me to my feet, and set me running toward the end of the shaft of sunlight. I left the heather, scrambled up some yards of screes, and had a difficult time on some very smooth slabs, where only the friction of tweed and rough rock gave me a hold. Slowly I worked my way toward the speck of sunlight, till I found a handhold, and swung myself into the crack. On one side was the main wall of the hill, on the other a tower some ninety feet high, and between a long crevice varying in width from three to six feet. Beyond it showed a small bright patch of sea.

There was more, for at the point where I entered it there was an overhang which made a fine cavern, low at the entrance, but a dozen feet high inside, and as dry as tinder. Here, thought I, is the perfect hiding place. Before going farther I resolved to return for food. It was not very easy descending, and I slipped the last twenty feet. At the burnside I filled my flask from the whisky bottle, and put half a loaf, a tin of sardines, a tin of tongue, and a packet of chocolate in my pockets. Laden as I was, it took me some time to get up again, but I managed it, and stored my belongings in a corner of the cave. Then I set out to explore the rest of the crack.

It slanted down and then rose again to a small platform. Beyond that it dropped in easy steps to the moor beyond the tower. If the Portuguese Jew had come here that was the way by which he had reached it, for he would not have had the time to make my ascent. I went very cautiously, for I felt I was on the eve of a big discovery. The platform was partly hidden from my end by a bend in the crack, and it was more or less screened by an outlying bastion of the tower from the other side. Its surface was covered with fine powdery dust, as were the steps beyond it. With a quickened pulse I knelt down and examined it.

Beyond doubt there was spoor here. I knew the Portuguese Jew's footsteps by this time and I made them out quite clearly, especially in one corner. But there were other footsteps, quite different. The one showed the tackets of rough country boots, the others were from unnailed soles. Again I longed for Peter to make certain, though I was pretty sure of my conclusions. The man I had followed had come here, and he had not stayed long. Some one else had been here, probably later, for the unnailed shoes overlaid the tackets. The first man might have left a message for the second. Perhaps the second was that human presence of which I had been dimly conscious in the nighttime.

I carefully removed all traces of my own footmarks, and went back to my cave. My head was humming with my discovery. I remembered Gresson's words to his friend: "To-morrow night." As I read it, the Portuguese Jew had taken a message to some one from Gresson, and that some one had come from somewhere and picked it up. The message contained an assignation for this very night. I had found a point of observation, for no one was likely to come near my cave, which was reached from the moor by such a toilsome climb. There I should bivouac and see what the darkness brought forth. I remember reflecting on the amazing luck which had so far attended me. As I looked from my refuge at the blue haze of twilight creeping over the waters, I felt my pulses quicken with a wild anticipation.

Then I heard a sound below me, and craned my neck round the edge of the tower. A man was climbing up the rock by the way I had come.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW A STRANGER BECAME AN ALLY.

I saw an old green felt hat, and below it lean tweed-clad shoulders. Then I saw a knapsack with a stick slung through it, as the owner wriggled his way on to a shelf. Presently he turned his face upward to

judge the remaining distance. It was the face of a young man, a face sallow and angular, but now flushed with the day's sun and the work of climbing. It was a face that I had first seen at Fosse Manor.

I felt suddenly sick and heartsore. I don't know why, but I had never really associated the intellectuals of Biggleswick with a business like this. None of them but Ivery, and he was different. They had been silly and priggish, but no more—yet here was one of them engaged in black treason to his native land. Something began to beat in my temples when I remembered that Mary and this man had been friends, that he had held her hand, and called her by her Christian name. My first impulse was to wait till he got up and then pitch him down among the bowlders and let his German accomplices puzzle over his broken neck.

With difficulty I kept down that tide of fury. I had my duty to do, and to keep on terms with this man was part of it. I had to convince him that I was an accomplice, and that might not be easy. My head felt so confused that I could not make any plan of conduct. I leaned over the edge, and, as he got to his feet on the ledge above the boiler plates, I whistled so that he turned his face to me.

"Hullo, Wake," I said.

He started, stared for a second and recognized me. He did not seem overpleased to see me. "Brand," he cried. "How did you get here?" He swung himself up beside me, straightened himself and unbuckled his knapsack. "I thought this was my own private sanctuary, and that nobody knew it but me. Have you spotted the cave? It's the best bedroom in Skye." His tone was, as usual, rather acid.

That little hammer was beating in my head. I longed to get my hands on his throat and choke the smug treason in him. But I kept my mind fixed on one purpose—to persuade him that I shared his secret and was on his side. His offhand self-possession seemed only the clever screen of the surprised conspirator who was hunting for a plan.

We entered the cave and he flung his pack into a corner. "Last time I was here," he said, "I covered the floor with heather. We must get some more if we would sleep soft." In the twilight he was a dim figure, but he seemed a new man from the one I had last seen in the Moot Hall at Biggleswick. There was a wiry vigor in his body and a purpose in his face. What a fool I had been to set him down as no more than a conceited gabbler!

He went out to the shelf again and sniffed the fresh evening. There was a wonderful red sky in the west, but in that crevice the shades had fallen, and only the bright patches at either end told of the sunset.

"Wake," I said. "You and I have to understand each other. I'm a friend of Ivery and I know the meaning of this place. I discovered it by accident, but I want you to know that I'm heart and soul with you. You may trust me in to-night's job as if I were Ivery himself. I——"

He swung round and looked at me sharply. His eyes were hot again, as I remembered them at our first meeting.

"What do you mean? How much do you know?"

The hammer was going hard in my forehead, and I had to pull myself together to answer.

"I know that at the end of this crack a message was left last night and that some one came out of the sea and picked it up. That some one is coming again when the darkness falls, and there will be another message."

He had turned his head away. "You are talking nonsense," he said. "No submarine could land on this coast." I could see that he was trying me.

"This morning," I said, "I swam in the deep-water inlet below. It is the most perfect submarine shelter in Britain."

He still kept his face from me, looking the way he had come. For a moment he was silent and then he spoke in the bitter drawling voice which had annoyed me at Fosse Manor.

"How do you reconcile this business with your principles, Mr. Brand? You were always a patriot, I remember, though you didn't see eye to eye with the government."

It was not quite what I expected and I was unready. I stammered in my reply. "It's because I am a patriot that I want peace. I think that—I mean——"

"Therefore you are willing to help the enemy to win?"

"They have already won. I want that recognized and the end hurried on." I was getting my mind clearer and continued fluently: "The longer the war lasts the worse

this country is ruined. We must make the people realize the truth, and——"

But he swung round suddenly, his eyes burning like coals.

"You blackguard!" he cried. "You damnable blackguard!" And he flung himself on me like a wild cat.

I had got my answer. He did not believe me, he knew me for a spy, and he was determined to do me up. We were beyond finesse now and back at the old barbaric game. It was his life or mine. The hammer beat furiously in my head as we closed and a fierce joy rose in my heart.

He never had a chance, for though he was in good trim and had the light, wiry figure of the mountaineer, he hadn't a quarter of my muscular strength. Besides, he was wrongly placed, for he had the outside station. Had he been on the inside he might have toppled me over the edge by his sudden assault. As it was, I grappled him and forced him to the ground, squeezing the breath out of his body in the process. I must have hurt him considerably, but he never gave a cry. With a good deal of trouble I lashed his hands behind his back with the belt of my Burberry, carried him inside the cave and laid him in the dark end of it. Then I tied his feet with the strap of his own knapsack. I would have to gag him but that might wait.

I had still to contrive a plan of action for the night, for I did not know what part he had been meant to play in it. He might be the messenger instead of the Portuguese Jew, in which case he would have papers about his person. If he knew of the cave, others might have the same knowledge, and I had better shift him before they came. I looked at my wrist watch and the luminous dial showed that the hour was half past nine.

Then I noticed that the bundle in the corner was sobbing.

It was a horrid sound and it worried me. I had a little pocket electric torch and I flashed it on Wake's face. If he was crying, it was with dry eyes.

"What are you going to do with me?" he asked.

"That depends," I said grimly.

"Well, I'm ready. I may be a poor creature, but I'm damned if I'm afraid of you, or anything like you." That was a brave thing to say, for it was a lie; his teeth were chattering.

"I'm ready for a deal," I said.

"You won't get it," was his answer. "Cut my throat if you mean to, but for God's sake don't insult me. I choke when I think about you. You come to us and we welcome you, and we receive you in our houses, and we tell you our inmost thoughts, and all the time you're a bloody traitor. You want to sell us to Germany. You may win now, but by God! your time will come! That is my last word to you—you swine!"

The hammer stopped beating in my head. I saw myself suddenly as a blind, preposterous fool. I strode over to Wake, and he shut his eyes as if he expected a blow. Instead, I unbuckled the straps which held his legs and arms.

"Wake, old fellow," I said, "I'm the worst kind of idiot. I'll eat all the dirt you want. I'll give you leave to knock me black and blue and I won't lift a hand. But not now. Now we've another job on hand. Man, we're on the same side and I never knew it. It's too bad a case for apologies, but if it's any consolation to you, I feel the lowest dog in Europe at this moment."

He was sitting up rubbing his bruised shoulders. "What do you mean?" he asked hoarsely.

"I mean that you and I are allies. My name's not Brand. I'm a soldier—a general, if you want to know. I went to Biggleswick under orders, and I came chasing up here on the same job. Ivery's the biggest German agent in Britain, and I'm after him. I've struck his communication lines, and this very night we'll get the last clew to the riddle. Do you hear? We're in this business together, and you've got to lend a hand."

I told him briefly the story of Gresson and how I had tracked his man here. As I talked we ate our supper, and I wish I could have watched Wake's face. He asked questions, for he wasn't convinced in a hurry. I think it was my mention of Mary Lamington that did the trick. I don't know why, but that seemed to satisfy him. But he wasn't going to give himself away.

"You may count on me," he said, "for this is black blackguardly treason. But you know my politics, and I don't change them for this. I'm more against this accursed war than ever, now that I know what war involves."

"Right-o," I said, "I'm a pacifist myself. You won't get any heroics about war from

me. I'm all for peace, but we've got to down these devils first."

It wasn't safe for either of us to stick in that cave, so we cleared away the marks of our occupation, and hid our packs in a deep crevice of the rock. Wake announced his intention of climbing the tower, while there was still a faint afterglow of light. "It's broad on the top, and I can keep a watch out to sea if any light shows. I've been up it before. I found the way two years ago. No, I won't fall asleep and tumble off. I slept most of the afternoon on the top of Sgurr Vhiconnich, and I'm as wakeful as a bat now."

I watched him shin up the face of the tower, and admired greatly the speed and neatness with which he climbed. Then I followed the crevice southward to the hollow just below the platform where I had found the footmarks. There was a big bowlder there, which partly shut off the view of it from the direction of our cave. The place was perfect for my purpose, for between the bowlder and the wall of the tower was a narrow gap, through which I could hear all that passed on the platform. I found a stance where I could rest in comfort and keep an eye through the crack on what happened beyond.

There was still a faint light on the platform, but soon that disappeared and black darkness settled down on the hills. It was the dark of the moon, and, as had happened the night before, a thin wrack blew over the sky hiding the stars. The place was very still though now and then would come the cry of a bird from the crags that bulked above me, and from the shore the pipe of a tern or oyster catcher. An owl hooted from somewhere up on the tower. That I reckoned was Wake, so I hooted back and was answered. We had established a means of communication.

I unbuckled my wrist watch and pocketed it, lest its luminous dial should betray me; and I noticed that the hour was close on eleven. I had already removed my shoes, and my jacket was buttoned round the collar so as to show no shirt. I did not think that the coming visitor would trouble to explore the crevice beyond the platform, but I wanted to be prepared for emergencies.

Then followed an hour of waiting. I felt wonderfully cheered and exhilarated for Wake had restored my confidence in human nature. In that eerie place we were wrapped round with mystery like a cloak. Some unknown figure was coming out of the sea, the emissary of that Power we had been at grips with for three years. It was as if the war had just made contact with our own shores, and never, not even when I was alone in the South German forest, had I felt myself so much the sport of a whimsical fate. I only wished Peter could have been with me. And so my thoughts fled to Peter in his prison camp, and I longed for another sight of my old friend as a girl longs for her lover.

Then I heard the hoot of an owl, and presently the sound of careful steps fell on my ear. I could see nothing, but I guessed it was the Portuguese Jew, for I could hear the grinding of heavily nailed boots on the gritty rock.

The figure was very quiet. It seemed to be sitting down, and then it rose and fumbled with the wall of the tower just beyond the bowlder behind which I sheltered. It seemed to move a stone and to replace it. After that came silence, and then once more the hoot of an owl. There were steps on the rock staircase, the steps of a man who did not know the road well and stumbled a little. Also they were the steps of one without nails in his boots.

They reached the platform and some one spoke. It was the Portuguese Jew and he spoke in good German:

"Die vögelein schweigen im Walde," he said.

The answer came from a clear authoritative voice:

"Warte nur, bald ruhest du auch."

Clearly some kind of password, for sane men don't talk about little birds in that kind of situation. It sounded to me like indifferent poetry.

Then followed a conversation in low tones, of which I only caught odd phrases. I heard two names—*Chelius* and what sounded like a Dutch word *Terwagne*. Then to my joy I caught *Elfenbein* and when uttered it seemed to be followed by a laugh. I heard too a phrase several times repeated, which seemed to me to be pure gibberish.—*Die Stubenvögel verstehn.* It was spoken by the man from the sea. And again the word *Waldvögel.* The pair seemed demented about birds.

For a second an electric torch was flashed in the shelter of the rock, and I could see a tanned bearded face looking at some papers. The light disappeared, and again the Por-

tuguese Jew was fumbling with the stones at the base of the tower. To my joy he was close to my crack and I could hear every word. "You cannot come here very often," he said, "and it may be hard to arrange a meeting. See, therefore, the place I have made to put the *Vögelfutter*. When I get a chance I will come here and you will come also when you are able. Often there will be nothing, but sometimes there will be much."

My luck was clearly in and my exultation made me careless. A stone on which a foot rested, slipped, and though I checked myself at once the confounded thing rolled down into the hollow making a great clatter. I plastered myself in the embrasure of the rock and waited with a beating heart. The place was pitch dark, but they had an electric torch and if they once flashed it on me I was done for. I heard them leave the platform and climb down into the hollow. There they stood listening, while I held my breath. Then I heard *"Nix, mein freund"* and the two went back, the naval officer's boots slipping on the gravel.

They did not leave the platform together. The man from the sea bade a short farewell to the Portuguese Jew, listening, I thought impatiently to his final message as if eager to be gone. It was a good half hour before the latter took himself off, and I heard the sound of his nailed boots die away as he reached the heather of the moor. I waited a little longer, and then crawled back to the cave. The owl hooted, and presently Wake descended lightly beside me; he must have known every foothold and handhold by heart to do the job in that inky blackness. I remember that he asked no question of me, but he used language rare on the lips of conscientious objectors about the man who had lately been in the crevice. We, who four hours earlier had been at deathgrips, now curled up on the hard floor like two tired dogs and fell sound asleep.

I woke to find Wake in a thundering bad temper. But his wounded pride disappeared before a bath and a breakfast—such as it was.

I found the spoor of the man from the sea quite fresh on a patch of gravel above the tide mark.

"There's our friend of the night," I said.

"I believe the whole thing was a whimsy," said Wake, his eyes on the chimneys of Sgurr Dearg. "They were only two natives—poachers, perhaps, or tinkers."

"Well, what do you make of that?" I pointed to a flat rock below tide mark covered with a tangle of seaweed. It was of a softer stone than the hard stuff in the hills and some heavy body had scraped off half the seaweed and a slice of the side. "That wasn't done yesterday morning, for I had my bath here."

Wake got up and examined the place. He nosed about in the crannies of the rocks lining the inlet, and got into the water again to explore better. When he joined me he was smiling.

"I apologize for my skepticism," he said. "There's been some petrol-driven craft here in the night. I can smell it, for I've a nose like a retriever. I dare say you're on the right track."

Wake proved a good draftsman, and with his assistance I drew a rough map of the crevice where we had roosted for the night, giving its bearings carefully in relation to the burn and the sea. Then I wrote down all the details about Gresson and the Portuguese Jew and described the latter in minute detail. I described, too, most precisely the cache where it had been arranged that the messages would be placed. That finished my stock of paper, and I left the record of the oddments overheard of the conversation for a later time. I put the thing in an old leather cigarette case I possessed, and handed it to Wake.

"You've got to go straight off to Kyle of Lochalsh and not waste any time on the way. Nobody suspects you, so you can travel any road you please. When you get there you ask for Mr. Andrew Amos, who has some government job in the neighborhood. Give him that paper from me. He'll know what to do with it all right. Tell him I'll get somehow to the Kyle before midday the day after to-morrow. I must cover my tracks a bit, so I can't come with you, and I want that thing in his hands just as fast as your legs will take you. If any one tries to steal it from you, for Heaven's sake eat it. You can see for yourself that it's devilish important."

"I shall be back in England in three days," he said. "Any message for your other friends?"

"Forget all about me. You never saw me here. I'm still Brand, the amiable Colonial studying social movements. If you meet Ivery, say you heard of me on the Clyde deep in sedition. But if you see Miss Lam-

ington, you can tell her I'm past the Hill Difficulty. I'm coming back as soon as God will let me, and I'm going to drop right into the Biggleswick push. Only this time I'll be a little more advanced in my views. You needn't get cross. I'm not saying anything against your principles. The main point is that we both hate dirty treason."

He put the case in his waistcoat pocket. We made our adieus, then he stalked off and I watched his lean figure till it was round the turn of the hill.

All that morning I smoked peacefully by the burn, and let my thoughts wander over the whole business. I had got precisely what Blenkiron wanted, a post office for the enemy. It would need careful handling, but I could see the juiciest lies passing that way to the Great General Staff. Yet I had an ugly feeling at the back of my head that it had been all too easy, and that Ivery was not the man to be duped in this way for long.

Meantime I had got to get back to London as inconspicuously as I had come. It might take some doing, for the police who had been active in Morvern might be still on the track, and it was essential that I should keep out of trouble and give no hint to Gresson and his friends that I had been so far north. However, that was for Amos to advise me, and about noon I picked up my Burberry with its bursting pockets and set off on a long detour up the coast. All that blessed day I scarcely met a soul. I passed a distillery which seemed to have quit business, and in the evening came to a little town on the sea where I had a bed and supper in a superior kind of public house.

Next day I struck southward along the coast, and had two experiences of interest. I had a good look at Raasay, and observed that the *Tobermory* was no longer there. Gresson had only waited to get his job finished; he could probably twist the old captain any way he wanted. The second was that at the door of a village smithy I saw the back of the Portuguese Jew. He was talking Gaelic this time—good Gaelic it sounded, and in that knot of idlers he would have passed for the ordinariest kind of gillie. He did not see me, and I had no desire to give him the chance, for I had an odd feeling that the day might come when it would be good for us to meet as strangers.

That night I put up boldly in the inn at Broadford where they fed me nobly on fresh sea trout and I first tasted an excellent liqueur made of honey and whisky. Next morning I was early afoot, and well before midday was in sight of the Narrows of the Kyle, and the two little stone clachans which face each other across the strip of sea.

About two miles from the place at a turn of the road I came upon a farmer's gig, drawn up by the wayside, with the horse cropping the moorland grass. A man sat on the bank smoking, with his left arm hooked in the reins. He was an oldish man, with a short square figure, and a woolen comforter enveloped his throat.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ADVENTURES OF A BAGMAN.

"Ye're punctual to time, Mr. Brand," said the voice of Amos. "But losh! man, what have ye done to your breeks? And your buits? Ye're no just very respectable in your appearance."

I wasn't. The confounded rocks of the Coolin had left their mark on my shoes, which moreover had not been cleaned for a week, and the same hills had rent my jacket at the shoulders and torn my trousers above the right knee and stained every part of my apparel with peat and lichen.

I cast myself on the bank beside Amos and lit my pipe. "Did you get my message?" I asked.

"Aye. It's gone on by a sure hand to the destination we ken of. Ye've managed well, Mr. Brand, but I wish ye were back in London." He sucked at his short pipe, and the shaggy brows were pulled so low as to hide the wary eyes. Then he proceeded to think aloud.

"Ye can't go back by Mallaig. I don't just understand why, but they're lookin' for you down that line. It's a vexatious business when your friends, meanin' the police, are doing their best to upset your plans and you no able to enlighten them. I could send word to the chief constable and get you through to London without a stop like a cargo of fish from Aiberdeen, but that would be spoilin' the fine character ye've been at such pains to construct. Na, na! Ye must take the risk and travel by Muirtown without any creedentials."

"It can't be a very big risk," I interpolated.

"I'm no so sure. Gresson's left the *Tober-*

mory. He went by here yesterday, on the Mallaig boat, and there was a wee black-avised man with him that got out at the Kyle. He's there still, stoppin' at the hotel. They ca' him Linklater and he travels in whisky. I don't like the looks of him."

"But Gresson does not suspect me?"

"Maybe no. But ye wouldna like him to see you hereaways. . Yon gentry don't leave muckle to chance. Be verra certain that every man in Gresson's lot ken all about you, and hae your description down to the mole on yer chin."

"Then they've got it wrong," I replied.

"I was speakin' feegeratively," said Amos. "I was considering your case the feck of yesterday, and I've brought the best I could do for ye in the gig. I wish ye were more respectable clad, but a good topcoat will hide defeecencies."

From behind the gig's seat he pulled an ancient Gladstone bag and revealed its contents. There was a bowler of a vulgar and antiquated style; there was a ready-made overcoat of some dark cloth of the kind that a clerk wears on the road to the office; there was a pair of detachable celluloid cuffs and there was a linen collar and dickie. Also there was a small hand case, such as bagmen carry on their rounds.

"That's your luggage," said Amos with pride. "That wee bag's full of samples. Ye'll mind I took the precaution of measurin' ye in Glesca, so the things'll fit. Ye've got a new name, Mr. Brand, and I've taken a room for ye in the hotel on the strength of it. Ye're Archibald McCaskie, and ye're travelin' for the firm o' Todd Sons and Brothers of Edinburgh. Ye ken the folk? They publish wee releegious books, that ye've bin trying to sell for Sunday-school prizes to the Free Kirk ministers in Skye."

The notion amused Amos and he relapsed into the somber chuckle which with him did duty for a laugh.

I put my felt hat and Burberry in the bag and donned the bowler and the topcoat. They fitted fairly well. Likewise the cuffs and collar, though here I struck a snag, for I had lost my scarf somewhere in the Coolin, and Amos, pelicanlike, had to surrender the rusty black tie which adorned his own person. It was a queer rig, and I felt like nothing on earth in it, but Amos was satisfied.

"Mr. McCaskie, sir," he said, "ye're the verra model of a publisher's traveler. Ye'd better learn a few biographical details, which ye've maybe forgotten. Ye're an Edinburgh man, but ye were some years in London which explains the way ye speak. Ye bide at 6 Russell Street, off the Meadows, and ye're an elder in the Nethergate U. F. Kirk. Have ye any special taste ye could lead the crack on to, if ye're engaged in conversation?"

I suggested the English classics.

"And verra suitable. Ye can try poalitics, too. Ye'd better be a Free Trader but convertit by Lloyd George. That's a common case, and ye'll need to be by-ordinar common. If I was you, I wad daunder about him for a bit, and no arrive at your hotel till after dark. Then you can have your supper and gang to bed. The Muirtown train leaves at half-seven in the morning. Na, ye can't come with me. It wouldna do for us to be seen thegather. If I meet ye in the street I'll never let on I know ye."

Amos climbed into the gig and jolted off home. I went down to the shore and sat among the rocks, finishing about tea time the remains of my provisions. In the mellow gloaming I strolled into the clachan and got a boat to put me over to the inn. It proved to be a comfortable place, with a motherly old landlady who showed me to my room and promised ham and eggs and cold salmon for supper. After a good wash, which I needed, and an honest attempt to make my clothes presentable, I descended to the meal in a coffe room lit by a single, dim paraffin lamp.

The food was excellent, and as I ate my spirits rose. In two days I should be back in London beside Blenkiron and somewhere within a day's journey of Mary. I could picture no scene now without thinking how Mary fitted into it. For her sake I held Biggleswick delectable, because I had seen her there. I wasn't sure if this was love, but it was something I had never dreamed of before, something which I hugged the thought of. It made the whole earth rosy and golden for me, and life so well worth living that I felt like a miser toward the days to come.

I had about finished supper, when I was joined by another guest. Seen in the light of that infamous lamp, he seemed a small alert fellow, with a bushy black mustache, and black hair parted in the middle. He had

fed already and appeared to be hungering for human society.

In three minutes he had told me that he had come down from Portree and was on his way to Leith. A minute later he had whipped out a card on which I read "J. J. Linklater," and in the corner the name of Hatherwick Bros. His accent betrayed that he hailed from the West.

"I've been up among the distilleries," he informed me. "It's a poor business distillin' in these times, wi' the teetotallers yowlin' about the nation's shame and the way to lose the war. I'm a temperate man mysel', but I would think shame to spile decent folks' business. If the government want to stop the drink, let them buy us out. They've permitted us to invest good money in the trade and they must see that we get it back. The other way will wreck public credit. That's what I say. A lawfu' trade's a lawfu' trade, says I, and it's contrary to public policy to pit it at the mercy of a wheen cranks. D'ye no agree, sir? By the way I havena got your name?"

I told him and he rambled on.

He was a merry little grig of a man and he babbled on, till I announced my intention of going to bed. If this was Amos' bagman, who had been seen in company with Gresson, I understood how idle may be the suspicions of a clever man.

I was up betimes, paid my bill, ate a breakfast of porridge and fresh haddock and walked the few hundred yards to the station. It was a warm, thick morning, with no sun visible, and the Skye hills misty to their base. The three coaches on the little train were nearly filled, when I had bought my ticket. I selected a third-class smoking carriage which held four soldiers returning from leave. The train was already moving when a late passenger hurried along the platform and clambered in beside me. A cheery "Mornin', Mr. McCaskie," revealed my fellow guest at the hotel.

The confounded fellow started to talk about the details of the book trade of which I knew nothing. He wanted to know on what terms we sold "juveniles," and what discount we gave the big wholesalers, and what class of book we put out—"on sale." I didn't understand a word of his jargon, and I must have given myself away badly, for he asked me questions about firms of which I had never heard and I had to make some kind of answer. I told myself that the donkey was harmless, and that his opinion of me mattered nothing, but as soon as I decently could I pretended to be absorbed in the "Pilgrim's Progress," a gaudy copy of which was among my samples. It opened at the episode of Christian and Hopeful in the Enchanted Ground, and in that stuffy carriage I presently followed the example of Heedless and Too Bold and fell sound asleep.

I was awakened by the train rumbling over the points of a little moorland junction. Sunk in a pleasing lethargy I sat with my eyes closed, and then covertly took a glance at my companion. He was reading a little dun-colored book, and marking passages with a pencil. His face was absorbed, and it was a new face, not the vacant, good-humored look of the garrulous bagman, but something shrewd, purposeful and formidable. I remained hunched up as if still sleeping, and tried to see what the book was. But my eyes, good as they are, could make out nothing of the text or title, except that I had a very strong opinion that that book was not printed in the English tongue.

I woke abruptly and leaned over to him. Quick as lightning he slid his pencil up his sleeve and turned on me with a fatuous smile.

"What d'ye make o' this, Mr. McCaskie? It's a wee book I picked up at a roup along with fifty others. I paid five shillings for the lot. It looks like Gairman, but in my young days they didna teach us foreign languages."

I took the thing and turned over the pages, trying to keep any sign of intelligence out of my face. It was German right enough, a little manual of hydrography with no publisher's name on it. It had the look of the kind of textbook a government department might issue to its officials.

I handed it back. "It's either German or Dutch. I'm not much of a scholar, barring a little French and the Latin I got at Heriots' Hospital. This is an awful slow train, Mr. Linklater."

The soldiers were playing nap, and the bagman proposed a game of cards. I remembered in time that I was an elder in the Nethergate U. F. Church and refused with some asperity. After that I shut my eyes again, for I wanted to think out the recent revelation.

"We change at Muirtown, don't we, Mr.

Linklater?" I asked once. "When does the train for the south leave?"

He consulted a pocket time-table. "Ten-thirty-three. There's generally four hours to wait for we're due in at six-fifteen. But this auld hearse will be lucky if it's in by nine."

His forecast was correct. We rumbled out of the hills into Laughlands, and caught a glimpse of the North Sea. Then we were hung up while a long goods train passed down the line. It was almost dark when at last we crawled into Muirtown station and disgorged our load of hot and weary soldiery.

It was Saturday night, and the streets were crowded. Bluejackets from the fleet, country folk in for market, and every kind of military detail thronged the pavements. Fish hawkers were crying their wares, and there was a tatterdemalion piper making the night hideous at a corner. I took a tortuous route and finally fixed on a modest-looking public house in a back street. When I inquired for a room I could find no one in authority, but a slatternly girl informed me that there was one vacant bed, and that I could have ham and eggs in the bar. So, after hitting my head violently against a cross-beam, I stumbled down some steps and entered a frowsy little place smelling of spilled beer and stale tobacco.

The promised ham and eggs proved impossible—there were no eggs to be had in Muirtown that night—but I was given cold mutton and a pint of indifferent ale. There was nobody in the place but two farmers drinking hot whisky and water and discussing with somber interest the rise in the price of feeding stuffs. I ate my supper, and was just preparing to find the whereabouts of my bedroom when through the street door there entered a dozen soldiers.

In a second the quiet place became a babel. The men were strictly sober, but there were in that temper of friendliness which demands a libation of some kind. One was prepared to stand treat; he was the leader of the lot, and it was to celebrate the end of his leave that he was entertaining his pals. From where I sat I could not see him but his voice was dominant. "What's your fancy, Jock? Beer for you, Andra? A pint and a dram for me. This is better than vongblong and vongrooge, Davie. Man, when I'm sittin' in those estamints, as they ca' them, I often long for a guid Scotch public."

The voice was familiar. I shifted my seat to get a view of the speaker, and then I hastily drew back. It was the big Scots fusileer I had clipped on the jaw in defending Gresson after the Glasgow meeting.

But by a strange fatality he had caught sight of me.

"Wha's that i' the corner?" he cried, leaving the bar to stare at me. Now it is a queer thing, but if you have once fought with a man, though only for a few seconds, you remember his face, and the scrap in Glasgow had been under a lamp. The Jock recognized me well enough.

"If this is no a bit o' luck!" he cried. "Boys, here's the man I feucht wi' in Glesca. Ye mind I telled ye about it. He laid me oot, and it's my turn to do the same wi' him. I had a notion I was going to make a night o' it. There's naebody can hit Geordie Hamilton without Geordie gettin' his ain back some day. Get up, mon, for I'm going to knock the heid off ye."

I duly got up and with the best composure I could muster looked him in the face.

"Ye're mistaken, my friend. I never clapped eyes on you before, and I never was in Glasgow in my life."

"That's a damned lee," said the fusileer. "Ye're the man, and, if ye're no, ye're like enough him to need a hidin'!"

"Confound your nonsense," I said. "I've no quarrel with you, and I've better things to do than be scrapping with a stranger in a public house."

"Have ye sae? Well, I'll learn ye better. I'm going to hit ye, and then ye'll hae to fight whether ye want it or no. Tam, haud my jaicket, and see that my drink's no skailed."

I did the best thing I could think of in the circumstances. My seat was close to the steps which led to the other part of the inn. I grabbed my hat, darted up them and before they realized what I was doing had bolted the door behind me. I could hear pandemonium break loose in the bar.

I slipped down a dark passage to another which ran at right angles to it and which seemed to connect the street door of the inn itself with the back premises. I could hear voices in the little hall and that stopped me short.

One of them was Linklater's, but he was not talking as Linklater had talked. He

was speaking educated English. I heard another with a Scotch accent, which I took to be the landlord's, and a third which sounded like some superior sort of constable's, very prompt and official. I heard one phrase, too, from Linklater—"He calls himself McCaskie." Then they stopped, for the turmoil from the bar had reached the front door. The fusileer and his friend were looking for me by the other entrance.

The attention of the men in the hall was distracted, and that gave me a chance. There was nothing for it but the back door. I slipped through it into a courtyard and almost tumbled over a tub of water. I planted the thing so that any one coming that way would fall over it. A door led me into an empty stable, and from that into a lane. It was all absurdly easy, but as I started down the lane I heard a mighty row and the sound of angry voices. Some one had gone into the tub and I hoped it was Linklater. I had taken a liking to the fusilier Jock.

There was the beginning of a moon somewhere, but that lane was very dark. I ran to the left, for on the right it looked like a cul-de-sac. This brought me into a quiet road of two-storied cottages which showed at one end the lights of a street. So I took the other way, for I wasn't going to have the whole population of Muirtown on the hue and cry after me. I came into a country lane, and I also came into the van of the pursuit, which must have taken a short cut. They shouted when they saw me, but I had a small start, and legged it down that road in the belief that I was making for open country.

That was where I was wrong. The road took me round to the other side of the town, and just when I was beginning to think I had a fair chance, I saw before me the lights of a signal box and a little to the left of it the lights of the station. In half an hour's time the Edinburgh train would be leaving, but I had made that impossible. Behind me I could hear the pursuers, giving tongue like beagle pups for they had attracted some pretty drunk gentlemen to their party.

I was badly puzzled where to turn, when I noticed outside the station a long line of blurred lights, which could only mean a train with the carriage blinds down. It had an engine attached and seemed to be waiting for the addition of a couple of trucks to start. It was a wild chance, but the only one I saw. I scrambled across a piece of waste ground, climbed an embankment and found myself on the metals. I ducked under the couplings and got on the far side of the train, away from the enemy. Then simultaneously two things happened. I heard the yells of my pursuers a dozen yards off, and the train jolted into motion. I jumped on the footboard, and looked into an open window. The compartment was packed with troops six a side and two men sitting on the floor, and the door was locked. I dived headforemost through the window and landed on the head of a weary warrior who had just dropped off to sleep.

"Gen'l'men," I hiccupped, "I 'pologize. I was late for this bl—blighted train and I mus' be in E'inbrugh 'morrow or I'll get the sack. I 'pologize. If I've hurt my friend's head, I'll kiss it and make it well."

At this there was a great laugh. "Ye'd better accept, Pete," said one. "It's the first time onybody ever offered to kiss your ugly heid."

A man asked me who I was, and I appeared to be searching for a card case.

"Losht," I groaned. "Losht, and so's my wee bag and I've losht my pot hat. I'm an awful sight, gen'l'men—an awful warning to be in time for trains. I'm John Johnstone, managing clerk to Messrs. Watters, Brown & Elph'stone, 923 Charl'tte Street, E'inburgh. I've bin up north seein' my mamma."

"Ye should be in France," said one man.

"Wish't I was, but they wouldn't let me. 'Mr. Johnstone,' they said, 'ye're no dam good. Ye've var'cose veins and a bad heart,' they said. So I says, 'Good mornin', gen'l'men. Don't blame me if ye lose the war.' That's what I said."

A plan came to me just after dawn, when we halted at a little junction. I got up yawning and tried to open the door, till I remembered it was locked. Thereupon I stuck my legs out of the window on the side away from the platform, and was immediately seized upon by a sleepy Seaforth who thought I contemplated suicide.

"Let me go," I said. "I'll be back in a jiffy."

"Let him gang, Jock," said another voice. "Ye ken what a man's like when he's been on the bash. The cauld air'll sober him."

I was released, and after some gymnastics dropped on the tracks and made my way round the rear of the train. As I clambered

on the platform it began to move, and a face looked out of one of the rear carriages. It was Linklater and he recognized me. He tried to get out, but the door was promptly slammed to by an indignant porter. I heard him protest, and he kept his head out till the train went round the curve. That cooked my goose all right. He would wire to the police from the next stopping place.

Meantime, in that clean bare chilly place there was only one traveler. He was a slim young man, with a kit bag and a gun case. His clothes were beautiful, a gray Hamburg hat, a smart green tweed overcoat, and boots as brightly polished as a horse chestnut. I caught his profile as he gave up his ticket, and to my amazement I recognized it.

The station master looked askance at me as I presented myself, dilapidated and dishevelled, to the official gaze. I tried to speak in a tone of authority.

"Who is the man who has just gone out?"

"Whaur's your ticket?"

"I had no time to get one at Muirtown, and as you see I have left my hat and my luggage behind me. Take it out of that pound and I'll come back for the change. I want to know if that was Sir Archibald Roylance."

He looked suspiciously at the note. "I think that's the name. He's a captain up at the Fleein' School. What was ye wantin' with him?"

I charged through the booking office and found my man about to enter a big gray motor car.

"Archie," I cried and beat him on the shoulder.

He turned round sharply. "What the devil—— Who are you?" And then recognition crept into his face and he gave a joyous shout. "My holy aunt! The colonel disguised as Charlie Chaplin! Can I drive you anywhere, sir?"

CHAPTER IX.

I TAKE THE WINGS OF A DOVE.

"Drive me somewhere to breakfast, Archie," I said, "for I'm perishing hungry."

He and I got into the tonneau and the driver swung us out of the station road up a long incline of hill. Sir Archie had been one of my subalterns in the old Lennox Highlanders, and had left us before the Somme to join the Flying Corps. I had heard that he had got his wings and had done well before Arras, and was now training pilots at home. He had been a light-hearted youth, who had endured a good deal of rough tonguing from me for his sins of omission. But it was the casual class of lad I was looking for now.

I saw him steal amused glances at my appearance.

"Been seeing a bit of life, sir?" he inquired respectfully.

"I'm being hunted by the police," I said.

"Dirty dogs! But don't worry, sir, we'll get you off all right. I've been in the same fix myself. You can lie snug in my little log hut, for that old image Gibbons won't blab. Or tell you what, I've got an aunt who lives near here and she's a bit of a sportsman. You can hide in her moated grange till the bobbies get tired."

I think it was Archie's calm acceptance of my position as natural and becoming that restored my good temper. He was far too well bred to ask what crime I had committed and I didn't propose to enlighten him much. But as we swung up the moorland road I let him know that I was serving the government, but that it was necessary that I should appear to be unauthenticated and that therefore I must dodge the police. He whistled his appreciation.

"Gad, that's a deep game. Sort of camouflage? Speaking from my experience it is easy to overdo that kind of stunt. When I was at Misieux the French started out to camouflage the caravans where they keep their pigeons, and they did it so darned well that the poor little birds couldn't hit 'em off, and spent the night out."

We entered the white gates of a big aërodrome, skirted a forest of tents and huts, and drew up at a shanty on the far confines of the place. The hour was about half past four, and the world was still asleep. Archie nodded toward one of the hangars, from the mouth of which projected the propeller end of an air plane.

"I'm by way of flying that bus down to Farnton to-morrow," he remarked. "It's the new Shark-Gladas. Got a mouth like a tree."

An idea flashed into my mind.

"You're going this morning," I said.

"How did you know?" he exclaimed. "I'm due to go to-day, but the grouse up in Caithness wanted shooting so badly that I decided to wangle another day's leave.

They can't expect a man to start for the south of England when he's just off a grousy journey."

"All the same you're going to be a stout fellow and start in two hours time. And you're going to take me with you."

He stared blankly, and then burst into a roar of laughter. "Gad, sir, you're the man to go tiger shooting with. But what about my commandant? He's not a bad chap, but a trifle shaggy about the fetlocks. He won't appreciate the joke."

"He needn't know. He mustn't know. This is an affair between you and me till it's finished. I promise you I'll make it all square with the Flying Corps. Get me down to Farnton before evening and you'll have done a good piece of work for the country."

"Right-o! Let's have a tub and bit of breakfast, and then I'm your man. I'll tell them to get the bus ready."

In Archie's bedroom I washed and shaved and borrowed a green tweed cap and a brand-new aquascutum. The latter covered the deficiencies of my raiment, and when I commandeered a pair of gloves I felt almost respectable. Gibbons, who seemed to be a jack-of-all-trades, cooked us some bacon and an omelet, and as he ate Archie yarned.

At six sharp we were ready to go. A couple of mechanics had got out the machine, and Archie put on his coat and gloves and climbed into the pilot's seat, while I got in behind in the observer's place. The aërodrome was waking up, but I saw no officers about. We were scarcely seated when Gibbons called our attention to a motor car on the road, and presently we heard a shout and saw men waving in our direction.

"Better get off, my lad," I said. "These look like my friends."

The engine started and the mechanics stood clear. As we taxied over the turf I looked back and saw several figures running in our direction. The next second we had left the bumpy earth for the smooth high-road of the air.

I had flown several dozen times before, generally over the enemy lines when I wanted to see for myself how the land lay. Then we had flown low, and been nicely dusted by the Hun Archies, not to speak of an occasional machine gun. But never till that hour had I realized the joy of a straight flight in a swift plane in perfect weather. Archie didn't lose time. Soon the hangars behind looked like a child's toys, and the world ran away from us till it seemed like a great golden bowl spilling over with the quintessence of light.

A great exhilaration is often the precursor of disaster, and mine was to have a sudden downfall. It was getting on for noon and we were well into England—I guessed from the rivers we had passed that we were somewhere in the north of Yorkshire—when the machine began to make odd sounds, and we bumped in perfectly calm patches of air. We dived and then climbed but the confounded thing kept sputtering. Archie passed back a slip of paper on which he had scribbled "Engine conked. Must land at Micklegill. Very sorry." So we dropped to a lower elevation where we could see clearly the houses and roads and the long swelling ridges of a moorland country. I could never have found my way about it, but Archie's practiced eye knew every landmark. We were trundling along very slowly now, and even I was soon able to pick up the hangars of a big aërodrome.

We made Micklegill, but only by the skin of our teeth. We were so low that the smoky chimneys of the city of Bradfield seven miles to the east were half hidden by a ridge of down. Archie achieved a clever descent in the lee of a belt of firs, and got out full of imprecations against the engine. "I'll go up to the camp and report," he said, "and send mechanics down to tinker this damned gramaphone. You'd better go for a walk, sir. I don't want to answer questions about you till we're ready to start. I reckon it'll be an hour's job."

The cheerfulness I had got in the upper air still filled me. I sat down in a ditch, as merry as a sand boy and lit a pipe. I was possessed by a boyish spirit of casual adventure, and waited on the next turn of fortune's wheel with only a pleasant amusement. That turn was not long in coming. Archie appeared very breathless.

"Look here, sir, there's the deuce of a row up there. They've been wiring about you all over the country, and they know you're with me. They've got the police and they'll have you in five minutes if you don't leg it. I lied like billy-o and said I had never heard of you, but they're coming to see for themselves. Now, get off! You'd better keep in cover down that hollow and round by the back of these trees. I'll stay

here and try to brazen it out. I'll get strafed to blazes anyhow. I hope you'll get me out of the scrape, sir."

"Don't you worry, my lad," I said, "I'll make it all square when I got back to town. I'll make for Bradfield for this place is a bit conspicuous. Good-by, Archie. You're a good chap and I'll see you don't suffer."

I started off down a hollow of the moor, trying to make speed atone for lack of strategy, for it was hard to know how much my pursuers commanded from that higher ground. They must have seen me, for I heard whistles blown and men's cries. I struck a road, crossed it and passed a ridge from which I had a view of Bradfield six miles off. And as I ran, I began to reflect that this kind of chase could not last long. They were bound to round me up in the next half hour unless I could puzzle them. But in that bare green place there was no cover, and it looked as if my chances were pretty much those of a hare coursed by a good greyhound on a naked moor. However, luck was with me, and I spied a bicycle by the side of a road not far off.

Without scruple, I mounted the machine. I reckoned I had the better part of two miles' start and could beat anything except petrol. But my enemies were bound to have cars, so I had better get off the road as soon as possible. I coasted down a long hill to a bridge which spanned a small discolored stream that flowed in a wooded glen. There was nobody for the moment on the hill behind me, so I nipped into the covert, shoved the bicycle under the bridge, and hid Archie's aquascutum in a bramble thicket. I was now in my old disreputable tweeds, and I hoped that the shedding of my most conspicuous garment would puzzle my pursuers if they should catch up with me.

A fish cart, helped by half a crown to the driver, took me past the outlying small villadom between long lines of workmen's houses, to narrow cobbled lanes and the purlieus of great factories. As soon as I saw the streets well crowded I got out and walked. In my old clothes I must have appeared like some second-class bookie or seedy horse coper. The only respectable thing I had about me was my gold watch. I looked at the time and found it half past five.

I wanted food and was casting about for an eating house when I heard the pur of a motor bicycle. It gave me time to efface myself by darting up a side street. I had an ugly sense that I was about to be trapped, for in a place I knew nothing of I had not a chance to use my wits. I remember trying feverishly to think, and I suppose that my preoccupation made me careless. I was now in a veritable slum and when I put my hand to my vest pocket I found that my watch had gone.

That put the top stone on my depression.

Presently, I came out into a market place. Whistles were blowing, and there was a great hurrying of people back from the mills. The crowd gave me a momentary sense of security, and I was just about to inquire my way to the railway station when some one jostled my arm.

A rough-looking fellow in mechanic's clothes was beside me.

"Mate," he whispered, "I've got summat o' yours here." And to my amazement he slipped my watch into my hand.

"It was took by mistake. We're friends o' yours. You're right enough if you do what I tell you. There's a peeler over there got his eye on you. Follow me and I'll get you off."

I didn't much like the fellow's looks, but I had no choice, and anyhow he had given me back my watch. He sidled into an alley between tall houses and I sidled after him. Then he took to his heels, and led me a twisting course through smelly courts into a tanyard and then by a narrow lane to the back quarters of a factory. Twice we doubled back, and once we climbed a wall and followed the bank of a blue-black stream with a filthy scum on it. Then we got into a very mean quarter of the town, and emerged in a dingy garden, strewn with tin cans and broken flowerpots. By a back door we entered one of the cottages and my guide very carefully locked it behind him.

He lit the gas and drew the blinds in a small parlor and looked at me long and quizzically. He spoke now in an educated voice.

"I ask no questions," he said, "but it's my business to put my services at your disposal. You carry the passport."

I stared at him and he pulled out his watch and showed a white and purple cross inside the lid.

"I don't defend all the people we employ," he said, grinning. "Men's morals are not always as good as their patriotism. One of them pinched your watch, and when he saw what was inside it he reported to me.

We soon picked up your trail, and observed you were in a bit of trouble. As I say, I ask no questions. What can we do for you?"

"I want to get to London without any questions asked. They're looking for me in my present rig, so I've got to change it."

"That's easy enough," he said. "Make yourself comfortable for a little and I'll fix you up. The night train goes at eleven-thirty. You'll find cigars in the cupboard."

I helped myself to a cigar and spent a profitable half hour reading. Then my host returned and bade me ascend to his bedroom. "You're Private Henry Tomkins of the 12th Gloucesters, and you'll find your clothes ready for you. I'll send on your present togs if you give me an address."

I did as I was bid and presently emerged in the uniform of a British private, complete down to the shapeless boots and the dropsical puttees. Then my friend took me in hand and completed the transformation. He started on my hair with scissors and arranged a lock which, when well oiled, curled over my forehead. My hands were hard and rough and only needed some grubbiness and hacking about the nails to pass muster. With my cap on the side of my head, a pack on my back, a service rifle in my hands, and my pockets bursting with penny picture papers, I was the very model of the British soldier returning from leave. I got a packet of Woodbine cigarettes and a hunch of bread and cheese for the journey. And I had a railway warrant made out in my name for London.

Then my friend gave me supper—bread and cold meat and a bottle of Bass, which I wolfed savagely, for I had had nothing since breakfast. He was a curious fellow, as discreet as a tombstone, very ready to speak about general subjects, but never once coming near the intimate business which had linked him and me and Heaven knew how many others by means of a little purple cross in a watchcase. I remember we talked about the topics that used to be popular at Biggleswick—the big political things that begin with capital letters. He took Amos' view of the soundness of the British workingman, but he said something which made me think. He was convinced that there was a tremendous lot of German spy work about, and that most of the practitioners were innocent.

"The ordinary Briton doesn't run to treason, but he's not very bright. A clever man in that kind of game can make better use of a fool than of a rogue."

As he saw me off he gave me a piece of advice. "Get out of those clothes as soon as you get to London. Private Tompkins will frank you out of Bradfield, but it mightn't be a healthy alias in the metropolis."

At eleven-thirty I was safe in the train, talking the jargon of the returning soldier with half a dozen of my own type in a smoky third-class carriage. I had been lucky in my escape, for at the station entrance and on the platform I had noticed several men with the unmistakable look of plain-clothes police. Also—though this may have been my fancy—I thought I caught in the crowd a glimpse of the bagman who had called himself Linklater.

CHAPTER X.

THE ADVANTAGES OF AN AIR RAID.

The train was abominably late. It was due at eight-twenty-seven, but it was nearly ten when we reached St. Pancras. I had resolved to go straight to my rooms in Westminster, buying on the way a cap and waterproof to conceal my uniform should any one be near my door on my arrival. Then I would ring up Blenkiron and tell him all my adventures. I breakfasted at a coffee stall, left my pack and rifle in the cloakroom, and walked out into the clear, sunny morning.

I was feeling very pleased with myself. Looking back on my madcap journey, I seemed to have had an amazing run of luck and to be entitled to a little credit, too. I told myself that persistence always pays and that nobody is beaten till he is stone-dead.

I was mooning along in a happy dream, when I collided violently with an agitated citizen. Then I realized that something very odd was happening.

There was a dull sound like the popping of the corks of flat soda-water bottles. There was a humming, too, from very far up in the skies. People in the street were either staring at the heavens or running wildly for shelter. A motor bus in front of me emptied its contents in a twinkling; a taxi pulled up with a jar and the driver and fare dived into a secondhand bookshop. It took me a second or two to realize the meaning of it all, and I had scarcely done this when I got a very practical proof. A hundred yards

away a bomb dropped on a street island, shivering every windowpane in a wide radius, and sending splinters of stone flying about my head. I did what I had done a hundred times before at the front, and dropped flat on my face.

The man who says he doesn't mind being bombed or shelled is either a liar or a maniac. This London air raid seemed to me a singularly unpleasant business. Bombs dropping in central London seemed a grotesque indecency. I hated to see plump citizens with wild eyes, and nursemaids with scared children, and miserable women scuttling like rabbits in a strange warren.

The drone grew louder, and looking up I could see the enemy planes flying in a beautiful formation, very leisurely as it seemed, with all London at their mercy. Another bomb fell to the right, and presently bits of our own shrapnel were clattering viciously around me. I thought it about time to take cover, and ran shamelessly for the best place I could see, which was a tube station. Five minutes before the street had been crowded, now I left behind me a desert dotted with one bus and three tenantless taxicabs.

I found the tube entrance filled with excited humanity. One stout lady had fainted, and a nurse had become hysterical, but on the whole people were behaving well. Oddly enough they did not seem inclined to go down the stairs to the complete security of underground; but preferred rather to collect where they could still get a glimpse of the upper world, as if they were torn between fear of their lives and interest in the spectacle. That crowd gave me a good deal of respect for my countrymen. But several were badly rattled, and one man a little way off, whose back was turned, kept twitching his shoulders as if he had the colic.

I watched him curiously, and a movement of the crowd brought his face into profile. Then I gasped with amazement for I saw that it was Ivery.

And yet it was not Ivery. There were the familiar nondescript features, the blandness, the plumpness, but all, so to speak, in ruins. The man was in a blind funk. His features seemed to be dislimning before my eyes. He was growing sharper, finer, in a way younger, a man without grip on himself, a shapeless creature in process of transformation. He was being reduced to his rudiments. Under the spell of panic he was becoming a new man.

And the crazy thing was that I knew the new man better than the old.

My hands were jammed close to my sides by the crowd, I could scarcely turn my head, and happily it was not the occasion for one's neighbors to observe one's expression. If it had been, mine must have been a study. My mind was far away from air raids, back in the hot summer weather of 1914. I saw a row of villas perched on a headland above the sea. In the garden of one of them two men were playing tennis, while I was crouching behind an adjacent bush. One of these was a plump young man who wore a colored scarf round his waist and babbled of golf handicaps. I saw him again in the villa dining room, wearing a dinner jacket, and lisping a little. I sat opposite him at bridge, I beheld him collared by two of Macgillivray's men, when his comrade had rushed for the thirty-nine steps that led to the sea. I saw, too, the sitting room of my old flat in Portland Place and heard little Scudder's quick anxious voice talking about the three men he feared most on earth, one of whom lisped in his speech. I had thought that all three had long ago been laid under the turf.

He was not looking my way, and I could devour his face in safety. There was no shadow of doubt. I had long ago put him down as the most amazing actor on earth, for had he not played the part of the first sea lord and deluded that officer's daily colleague? But he could do far more than any human actor, for he could take on a new personality and with it a new appearance and live steadily in the character as if he had been born in it. My mind was a blank, and I could only make blind gropings at conclusions. How had he escaped the death of a spy and a murderer, for I had last seen him in the hands of justice? Of course, he had known me from the first day in Bigglesswick! I had thought to play with him, and he had played most cunningly and damnably with me. In that sweating sardine tin of refugees I shivered in the bitterness of my chagrin.

And then I found his face turned to mine, and I knew that he recognized me. More, I knew that he knew that I had recognized him—not as Ivery, but as that other man. There came into his eyes a curious look of comprehension, which for a moment overcame his funk.

I had sense enough to see that that put the final lid on it. There was still some-

thing doing if he believed that I was blind, but if he once thought that I knew the truth he would be through our meshes and disappear like a fog.

My first thought was to get at him and collar him and summon everybody to help me by denouncing him for what he was. Then I saw that that was impossible. I was a private soldier in a borrowed uniform, and he could easily turn the story against me. I must use stronger weapons. I must get to Bullivant and Macgillivray and set their big machine at work. Above all, I must get to Blenkiron.

I started to squeeze out of that push, for air raids now seemed far too trivial to give a thought to. Moreover, the guns had stopped, but so sheeplike is human nature that the crowd still hung together, and it took me a good fifteen minutes to edge my way to the open air. I found that the trouble was over, and the street had resumed its usual appearance. Busses and taxis were running, and voluble knots of people were recounting their experiences. I started off for Blenkiron's bookshop, as the nearest harbor of refuge.

But in Piccadilly Circus I was stopped by a military policeman. He asked my name and battalion, and I gave him them, while his suspicious eye ran over my figure. I had no pack or rifle, and the crush in the tube station had not improved my appearance. I explained that I was going back to France, and he asked for my warrant. I fancy my preoccupation made me nervous and I lied badly. I said I had left it in the house of my married sister, but I fumbled in giving the address. I could see that the fellow did not believe a word I said.

Just then up came an A. P. M. He was a pompous dugout, very splendid in his red tabs and probably bucked up at having just been under fire. Anyhow he was out to walk in the strict path of duty.

"Tomkins!" he said. "Tomkins! We've got some fellow of that name on our records. Bring him along, Wilson."

"But, sir," I said. "I must—I simply must meet my friend. It's urgent business and I assure you I'm all right. If you don't believe me, I'll take a taxi and we'll go down to Scotland Yard and I'll stand by what they say."

His brow grew dark with wrath. "What infernal nonsense is this? Scotland Yard! What the devil has Scotland Yard to do with it? You're an impostor. I can see it in your face. I'll have your depot rung up, and you'll be in jail in a couple of hours. I know a deserter when I see him. Bring him along, Wilson. You know what to do if he tries to bolt."

I had a momentary thought of breaking away, but decided that the odds were too much against me. Fuming with impatience I followed the A. P. M. to his office on the first floor in a side street. The precious minutes were slipping away; Ivery, now thoroughly warned, was making good his escape, and I, the sole repository of a vital secret, was tramping in this absurd procession.

The A. P. M. issued his orders. He gave instructions that my depot should be rung up, and he bade Wilson remove me to what he called the guardroom. He sat down at his desk, and busied himself with a mass of buff dockets.

In desperation I renewed my appeal. "I implore you to telephone to Mr. Macgillivray at Scotland Yard. It's a matter of life and death, sir. You're taking a very big responsibility if you don't."

I had hopelessly offended his brittle dignity. "Any more of your insolence and I'll have you put in irons. I'll attend to you soon enough for your comfort. Get out of this till I send for you."

As I looked at his foolish, irritable face I realized that I was fairly up against it. Short of assault and battery on everybody, I was bound to submit. I saluted respectfully and was marched away.

The hours I spent in that bare anteroom are like a nightmare in my recollection. A sergeant was busy at a desk with more buff dockets and an orderly waited on a stool by a telephone. I looked at my watch and observed that it was one o'clock. Soon the slamming of a door announced that the A. P. M. had gone to lunch. I tried conversation with the fat sergeant, but he very soon shut me up. So I sat hunched up on the wooden bench and chewed the cud of my vexation.

For of course Ivery had played with me, played with me since the first day at Biggleswick. He had applauded my speeches and flattered me, and advised me to go to the Clyde, laughing at me all the time. Gresson, too, had known. Now I saw it all. He had tried to drown me between Colonsay and Mull. It was Gresson who

had set the police on me in Morvern. The thought drove me frantic, and I got up and paced the floor. I saw the orderly with rather a scared face making ready to press the bell, and I noticed that the fat sergeant had gone to lunch.

"Say, mate," I said, "don't you feel inclined to do a poor fellow a good turn? I know I'm for it all right, and I'll take my medicine like a lamb. But I want badly to put a telephone call through."

"It ain't allowed," was the answer. "I'd get 'ell from the old man."

"But he's gone out," I urged. "I don't want you to do anything wrong, mate. I leave you to do the talkin' if you'll only send my message. I'm flush of money, and I don't mind handing you a quid for the job."

He was a pinched little man with a weak chin and he obviously wavered.

"Oo d'ye want to talk to?" he asked.

"Scotland Yard," I said, "the home of the police. Lord bless you, there can't be no harm in that. Ye've only got to ring up Scotland Yard—I'll give you the number—and give the message to Mr. Macgillivray. He's the head bummer of all the bobbies."

"That sounds a bit of all right," he said. "The old man 'e won't be back for 'alf an hour, nor the sergeant neither. Let's see your quid though."

I laid a pound note on the form beside me. "It's yours, mate, if you get through to Scotland Yard and speak the piece I'm going to give you."

He went over to the instrument. "What d'you want to say to the bloke with the long name?"

"Say that Richard Hannay is detained at the A. P. M.'s office in Claxon Street. Say he's got important news—say urgent and secret news—and ask Mr. Macgillivray to do something about it at once."

"But 'Annay ain't the name you gave."

"Lord bless me, no. Did you never hear of a man borrowin' another name? Anyhow, that's the one I want you to give."

"But if this Mac man comes round 'ere, they'll know 'e's bin rung up, and I'll 'ave the old man down on me."

It took ten minutes and a second pound note to get him past this hurdle. By and by he screwed up courage and rang up the number. I listened with some nervousness while he gave my message—he had to repeat it twice—and waited eagerly on the next words.

"No, sir," I heard him say, "'E don't want you to come round 'ere. 'E think as 'ow—I mean to say, 'e wants——"

I took a long stride and twitched the receiver from him. "Macgillivray," I said, "is that you? Richard Hannay. For the love of God come round here this instant and deliver me from the clutches of a tomfool A.-P. M. I've got the most deadly news. There's not a second to waste. Come quick!" Then I added: "Just tell your fellows to gather in Ivery at once. You know his lairs."

I hung up the receiver and faced a pale and indignant orderly. "It's all right," I said, "I promise you that you won't get into any trouble on my account. And there's your two quid."

The door in the next room opened and shut. The A. P. M. had returned from lunch.

Ten minutes later the door opened again. I heard Macgillivray's voice, and it was not pitched in dulcet tones. He had run up against minor officialdom and was making hay with it.

I was my own master once more, so I forsook the company of the orderly. I found a most rattled major trying to save a few rags of his dignity and the formidable figure of Macgillivray instructing him in manners.

"Glad to see you, Dick," he said. "This is General Hannay, sir. It may comfort you to know that your darned folly may have made just the difference between your country's victory and defeat. I shall have a word to say to your superior officer."

It was hardly fair. I had to put in a word for the old fellow, whose red tabs seemed suddenly to have grown dingy.

"It was my blame wearing this kit. We'll call it a misunderstanding and forget it. But I would suggest that civility is not wasted even on a poor devil of a defaulting private soldier."

Once in Macgillivray's car, I poured out my tale. "Tell me it's a nightmare," I cried. "Tell me that the three men we collected on the Riff were shot long ago."

"Two," he replied, "but one escaped. Heaven knows how he managed it, but he disappeared clean out of the world."

"The plump one who lisped in his speech?"

Macgillivray nodded.

"Well, we're in for it this time. Have you issued instructions?"

"Yes. With luck we shall have our hands on him within an hour. We've our net round all his haunts."

"But two hours' start! It's a big handicap, for you're dealing with a genius."

"Yet I think we can manage it. Where are you bound for?"

I told him my rooms in Westminster and then to my old flat in Park Lane. "The day of disguises is past. In half an hour I'll be Richard Hannay. It'll be a comfort to get into uniform again. Then I'll look up Blenkiron."

He grinned. "I gather you've had a riotous time. We've had a good many anxious messages from the north about a certain Mr. Brand. I couldn't discourage our men, for I fancied it might have spoiled your game. I heard that last night they had lost touch of you in Bradfield, so I rather expected to see you here to-day. Efficient body of men the Scotch police."

"Especially when they have various enthusiastic amateur helpers."

"So?" he said. "Yes, of course. They would have. But I hope presently to congratulate you on the success of your mission."

"I'll bet you a pony you don't," I said.

"I never bet on a professional subject. Why this pessimism?"

"Only that I know our gentleman better than you. I've been twice up against him. He's the kind of wicked that don't cease from troubling till they're stone-dead. And even then I'd want to see the body cremated and take the ashes into mid-ocean and scatter them. I've got a feeling that he's the biggest thing you or I will ever tackle."

CHAPTER XI.

THE VALLEY OF HUMILIATION.

I collected some baggage and a pile of newly arrived letters from my rooms in Westminster, and took a taxi to my Park Lane flat. Usually I had gone back to that old place with a great feeling of comfort, like a boy from school who ranges about his room at home, and examines his treasures. I used to like to see my hunting trophies on the wall and to sink into my own armchair. But now I had no pleasure in the thing. I had a bath, and changed into uniform, and that made me feel in better fighting trim. But I had a horrid conviction of abject failure, and had no share in Macgillivray's optimism. The awe with which the Black Stone gang had filled me three years before had revived a thousandfold. Personal humiliation was the least part of my trouble. What worried me was the sense of being up against something inhumanly formidable and wise and strong. I believe I was willing to own defeat and chuck up the game.

Among the unopened letters was one from Peter, a very bulky one which I sat down to read at leisure. It was a curious epistle, far the longest he had ever written me, and its size made me understand his loneliness. He was still at his German prison camp, but expecting every day to go to Switzerland. He said he could get back to England or South Africa, if he wanted, for they were clear that he could never be a combatant again; but he thought he had better stay in Switzerland, for he would be unhappy in England with all his friends fighting. As usual, he made no complaints, and seemed to be very grateful for his small mercies. There was a doctor who was kind to him, and some good fellows among the prisoners.

But Peter's letter was made up chiefly of reflections. He had always been a bit of a philosopher, and now in his isolation, he had taken to thinking hard and poured out the results to me on pages of thin paper in his clumsy handwriting. I could read between the lines that he was having a hard fight with himself. He was trying to keep his courage going in face of the bitterest trial he could be called on to face—a crippled old age. He had always known a good deal about the Bible, and that and the "Pilgrim's Progress" were his chief aids to reflection. Both he took quite literally, as if they were newspaper reports of actual recent events. He mentioned that after much consideration he had reached the conclusion that the three greatest men he had ever heard of or met were Mr. Valiant-for-Truth, the Apostle Paul, and a certain Billy Strang who had been with him in Mashonaland in '92. Billy I had often heard about; he had been Peter's hero and leader till a lion got him in the Blaaunberg. Peter preferred Valiant-for-Truth to Mr. Greatheart, I think, because of his superior truculence, for being very gentle himself he loved a bold speaker. After that he dropped into a vein of self-examination. He regretted that he fell far

short of any of the three. He thought that he might with luck resemble Mr. Standfast, for like him he had not much trouble in keeping wakeful and was also as "poor as a mouse," and didn't much care for women. He only hoped that he could imitate him in making a good end.

Then followed some remarks of Peter's on courage, which came to me in that London room as if spoken by his living voice. I have never known any one so brave, so brave by instinct, or any one who hated so much to be told so. It was almost the only thing that could make him angry. All his life he had been facing death, and to take risks seemed to him as natural as to get up in the morning and eat his breakfast.

Peter was writing for his own comfort, for fortitude was all that was left to him now. But his words came pretty straight to me, and I read them again and again, for I needed the lesson. Here was I losing heart just because I had failed in the first round and my pride had got a knock. I felt honestly ashamed of myself, and that made me a far happier man. There could be no question of dropping the business whatever its difficulties. I had a queer religious feeling that Ivery and I had our fortunes intertwined, and that no will of mine could keep us apart. I had faced him before the war and won. I had faced him again and lost; the third time or the twentieth time we would reach a final decision. The whole business had hitherto appeared to me a trifle unreal, at any rate my own connection with it. I had been docilely obeying orders, but my real self had been standing aside and watching my doings with a certain aloofness. But that hour in the tube station had brought me into the scrum, and I saw the affair not as Bullivant's or even Blenkiron's, but as my own. Before I had been itching to get back to the front, now I wanted to get on to Ivery's trail, though it should take me through the nether pit. Peter was right; fortitude was the thing a man must possess if he would save his soul.

The hours passed, and, as I expected, there came no word from Macgillivray. I had some dinner sent up to my flat at seven o'clock, and about eight I was thinking of looking up Blenkiron. Just then came a telephone call asking me to go round to Sir Walter Bullivant's house in Queen Anne's Gate. Ten minutes later I was ringing the bell, and the door was opened to me by the same impassive butler who had admitted me on that famous night three years before. Nothing had changed in that pleasant green-paneled hall; the alcove was the same as when I had watched from it the departure of the man who now called himself Ivery: the telephone book lay in the very place from which I had picked it up feverishly in order to ring up the first sea lord. And in the back room, where that night five anxious officials had conferred, I found Sir Walter and Blenkiron.

Both looked worried, the American feverishly so. He walked up and down the hearthrug sucking an unlit black cigar.

"Say, Dick," he said, "this is a bad business. It wasn't any fault of yours. You did fine. It was us—me and Sir Walter and Mr. Macgillivray that were the standpatters."

The bell rang, and the door opened, but it was not Macgillivray. It was a young girl in a white ball gown, with a cluster of blue cornflowers at her breast. The sight of her fetched Sir Walter out of his chair so suddenly that he upset his coffee cup.

"Mary, my dear, how did you manage it? I didn't expect you till the late train."

"I was in London, you see, and they telephoned your telegram. I'm staying with Aunt Doria, and I cut her theater party. She thinks I'm at the Shandwicks' dance, so I needn't go home till morning. Good evening, General Hannay. You got over the Hill Difficulty."

"The next stage is the Valley of Humiliation," I answered.

"So it would appear," she said gravely, and sat very quietly on the edge of Sir Walter's chair with her small cool hand upon his.

We waited, hardly speaking a word, till Macgillivray came. The first sight of his face told his story.

"Gone?" asked Blenkiron sharply. The man's lethargic calm seemed to have wholly deserted him.

"Gone," repeated the newcomer. "We have just tracked him down. Oh, he managed it cleverly. Never a sign of disturbance in any of his lairs. His dinner ordered at Biggleswick and several people invited to stay with him for the week-end—one a member of the government. Two meetings at which he was to speak arranged for next week. Early this afternoon he flew over to France as a passenger in one of the new

planes. He had been mixed up with the air-board people for months—of course as another man with another face. Miss Lamington discovered that just too late. The bus went out of its course and came down in Normandy. By this time our man's in Paris or beyond it."

Sir Walter took off his big tortoise-shell spectacles and laid them carefully on the table.

"Roll up the map of Europe," he said. "This is our Austerlitz. Mary, my dear, I am feeling very old."

Macgillivray had the sharpened face of a bitterly disappointed man. Blenkiron had got very red, and I could see that he was blaspheming violently under his breath. Mary's eyes were quiet and solemn. She kept on patting Sir Walter's hand. The sense of some great impending disaster hung heavily on me, and to break the spell I asked for details.

"Tell me just the extent of the damage," I asked. "Our neat plan for deceiving the Boche has failed. That is bad. A dangerous spy has got beyond our power. That's worse. Tell me, is there still a worst? What's the limit of mischief he can do?"

Sir Walter had risen and joined Blenkiron on the hearthrug. His brows were furrowed and his mouth hard as if he were suffering pain.

"There is no limit," he said. "None that I can see, except the long-suffering of God. You realized that we feared Ivery, and you knew him as that other whom you believed to have been shot one summer morning and decently buried. You feared the second, at least if you didn't I did—most mortally. You realized that we feared Ivery, and you knew enough about him to see his hellish cleverness. Well, you have the two men combined in one man. Ivery was the best brain Macgillivray and I ever encountered, the most cunning and patient and long-sighted. Combine him with the other, the chameleon who can blend himself with his environment, and has as many personalities as there are types and traits on the earth. What kind of enemy is that to have to fight?"

"I admit it's a steep proposition. But after all, how much ill can he do? There are pretty strict limits to the activity of even the cleverest spy."

"I agree. But this man is not a spy who buys a few wretched subordinates and steals a dozen private letters. He's a genius who has been living as part of our English life. There's nothing he hasn't seen. He's been on terms of intimacy with all kinds of politicians. We know that. He did it as Ivery. They rather liked him, for he was clever and flattered them, and they told him things. But God knows what he saw and heard in his other personalities. For all I know he may have breakfasted at Downing Street with letters of introduction from President Wilson, or visited the Grand Fleet as a distinguished neutral. Then think of the women; how they talk. We've the leakiest society on earth, and we safeguard ourselves by keeping dangerous people out of it. We trust to our outer barrage. But any one who has really slipped inside has a million chances. And this, remember, is one man in ten millions, a man whose brain never sleeps for a moment, who is quick to seize the slightest hint, who can piece a plan together out of a dozen bits of gossip. It's like—it's as if the chief of the intelligence department were suddenly to desert to the enemy. The ordinary spy knows only bits of unconnected facts. This man knows our life and our way of thinking and everything about us."

"Well, but a treatise on English life in time of war won't do much good to the Boche."

Sir Walter shook his head. "Don't you realize the explosive stuff that is lying about? Ivery knows enough to make the next German peace offensive really deadly—not the blundering thing which it has been up to now, but something which gets our weak spots on the raw. He knows enough to wreck our campaign in the field. And the damnable thing is that we don't know just what he knows or what he is aiming for. This war's a packet of surprises. Both sides are struggling for the margin, the little fraction of advantage, and between evenly matched enemies it's just the extra atom of foreknowledge that tells."

"Then we've got to push off and get after him," I said cheerfully.

"But what are you going to do?" asked Macgillivray. "If it were merely a question of destroying an organization it might be managed, for an organization presents a big front. But it's a question of destroying this one man, and his front is a razor edge. How are you going to find him? It's like looking for a needle in a haystack, and such a

needle! A needle which can become a piece of straw or a tin tack when it chooses!"

"All the same, we've got to do it," I said, remembering old Peter's lesson on fortitude, though I can't say I was feeling very stout-hearted.

Sir Walter flung himself wearily into an armchair.

He looked at Mary. Her face was very grave and her eyes looked steadily at him. Then they moved and met mine, and they seemed to give me my marching orders.

"Sir Walter," I said, "three years ago you and I sat in this very room. We thought we were done to the world, as we think now. We had just that one miserable little clew to hang on to—a dozen words scribbled in a notebook by a dead man. You thought I was mad when I asked for Scudder's book, but we put our backs into the job and in twenty-four hours we had won out. Remember that then we were fighting against time. Now we have a reasonable amount of leisure. Then we had nothing but a sentence of gibberish. Now we have a great body of knowledge, for Blenkiron has been brooding over Ivery like an old hen, and he knows his ways of working and his breed of confederate. You've got something to work on now. Do you mean to tell me that, when the stakes are so big, you're going to chuck in your hand?"

Macgillivray raised his head. "We know a good deal about Ivery, but Ivery's dead. We know nothing of the man who was gloriously resurrected this evening in Normandy."

"Oh, yes, you do. There are many faces to the man, but only one mind, and you know plenty about that mind."

"I wonder," said Sir Walter. "How can you know a mind which has no characteristics except that it is wholly and supremely competent? Mere mental powers won't give us a clew. We want to know the character which is behind all the personalities. Above all we want to know its foibles. If we had only a hint of some weakness we might make a plan."

"Well, let's set down all we know," I cried, for the more I argued the keener I grew. I told them in some detail the story of the night in the Coolin and all I had heard there.

"There's the two names *Chelins* and *Bommaerts*. The man spoke them in the same breath as *Elfenbein*, so they must be associated with Ivery's gang. You've got to get the whole secret service of the Allies busy to fit a meaning to these two words. Surely to goodness you'll find something. Remember those names don't belong to the Ivery stunt, but to the big game behind all the different disguises. Then there's the talk about the Wild Birds and the Cage Birds. I haven't a guess at what it means. But it refers to some infernal gang, and among your piles of records there must be some clew. You set the intelligence of two hemispheres busy on the job. You've got all the machinery, and it's my experience that if even one solitary man keeps chewing on at a problem he discovers something."

My enthusiasm was beginning to strike sparks from Macgillivray. He was looking thoughtful now, instead of despondent.

"There might be something in that," he said, "but it's a far-out chance."

"Of course it's a far-out chance, and that's all we're ever going to get from Ivery. But we've taken a bad chance before and won. Then you've all that you know about Ivery here. Go through his *dossier* with a small-tooth comb and I'll bet you find something to work on. Blenkiron, you're a man with a cool head. You admit we've a sporting chance."

"Sure, Dick. He's fixed things so that the lines are across the track, but we'll clear somehow. So far as John S. Blenkiron is concerned, he's got just one thing to do in this world, and that's to follow the yellow dog and have him neatly and cleanly tidied up. I've got a stack of personal affronts to settle. I was easy meat and he hasn't been very respectful. You can count me in, Dick."

"Then we're agreed," I cried. "Well, gentlemen, it's up to you to arrange the first stage. You've some pretty solid staff work to put in before you get on the trail."

"And you?" Sir Walter asked.

"I'm going back to my brigade. I want a rest and a change. Besides, the first stage is office work and I'm no use for that. But I'll be waiting to be summoned, and I'll come like a shot as soon as you hock me out. I've got a presentiment about this thing. I know there'll be a finish and that I'll be in at it, and I think it will be a desperate bloody business, too."

I found Mary's eyes fixed upon me, and in them I read the same presentiment. She had not spoken a word, but had sat on the edge

of a chair, swinging a foot idly, one hand playing with an ivory fan. She had given me my old orders, and I looked to her for confirmation of the new.

"Miss Lamington, you are the wisest of the lot of us. What do you say?"

She smiled—that shy, companionable smile which I had been picturing to myself through all the wanderings of the past month.

"I think you are right. We've a long way to go yet, for the Valley of Humiliation comes only halfway in the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' The next stage was Vanity Fair. I might be of some use there, don't you think?"

I remember the way she laughed and flung back her head like a gallant boy.

"The mistake we've all been making," she said, "is that our methods are too *terre-à-terre*. We've a poet to deal with, a great poet, and we must fling our imaginations forward to catch up with him. His strength is his unexpectedness, you know, and we won't beat him by plodding only. I believe the wildest course is the wisest, for it's the most likely to intersect his. Who's the poet among us?"

"Peter," I said. "But he's pinned down with a game leg in Germany. All the same, we must rope him in."

After that we went upstairs to a noble Georgian drawing-room and Mary played to us. I don't care two straws for music from an instrument—unless it be the pipes or a regimental band—but I dearly love the human voice. But she would not sing, for singing to her, I fancy, was something that did not come at will, but flowed only like a bird's note when the mood favored. I did not want it either. I was content to let "Cherry Ripe" be the one song linked with her in my memory.

It was Macgillivray who brought us back to business.

"I wish to Heaven there was one habit of mind we could definitely attach to him and to no one else." At this moment "he" had only one meaning for us.

A memory of Peter recurred to me.

"What about the 'blind spot?'" I asked, and I told them old Peter's pet theory. "Every man that God made has his weak spot somewhere, some flaw in his character which leaves a dull patch in his brain. We've got to find that out, and I think I've made a beginning."

Macgillivray in a sharp voice asked my meaning.

"He's in a funk of something. Oh, I don't mean he's a coward. A man in his trade wants the nerve of a buffalo. He could give us all points in courage. What I mean is that he's not clean white all through. There are yellow patches somewhere in him. I've given a good deal of thought to this courage business, for I haven't got a great deal of it myself. Not like Peter, I mean. I've got heaps of soft places in me. I'm afraid of being drowned for one thing, or of getting my eyes shot out. Ivery's afraid of bombs—at any rate he's afraid of bombs in a big city. I once read a book which talked about a thing called *agoraphobia*. Perhaps it's that. Now if we knew that weak spot, it helps us in our work. There are some places he won't go to, and there are some things he won't do—not well, anyway. I reckon that's useful."

"Ye-es," said Macgillivray. "Perhaps. But it's not what you'd call a burning and a shining light."

"There's another chink in his armor," I went on. "There's one person in the world he can never practice his transformations on, and that's me. I shall always know him again, though he appeared as Sir Douglas Haig. I can't explain why, but I've got a feel in my bones about it. I didn't recognize him before, for I thought he was dead, and the nerve in my brain, which should have been looking for him, wasn't working. But I'm on my guard now, and that nerve's functioning at full power. Whenever and wherever and howsoever we meet again on the face of the earth, it will be 'Doctor Livingstone, I presume' between him and me."

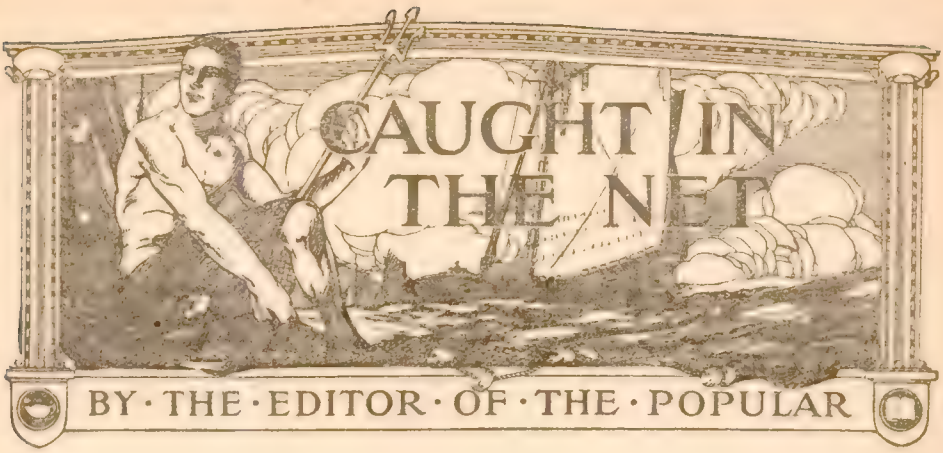
"That is better," said Macgillivray. "If we have any luck, Dick, it won't be long till we pull you out of his majesty's forces."

Mary got up from the piano and resumed her old perch on the arm of Sir Walter's chair.

"There's another blind spot which you haven't mentioned." It was a cool evening, but I noticed that her cheeks had suddenly flushed.

"Last week Mr. Ivery asked me to marry him," she said.

TO BE CONTINUED.



NATIONAL DEBTS

ONE of the senators, Borah, of Idaho feared the debt America would contract by reason of the war would mortgage the energy and capacity of the country for two centuries and a half.

Let us see.

War has its compensations. One is in making men secrete wealth, usually in greater volume than before.

If war did not have some compensations the wars in which nations have engaged at various times since the recording of history would have desolated the earth and bankrupted mankind.

The Napoleonic wars ravaged Europe yet Europe recovered promptly and the nineteenth century saw a tremendous broadening of industry and wealth through the world.

Is America, the richest nation of the earth, to be crushed by a debt such as this war imposes? To-day we have a national debt of fifteen billions of dollars. It is conceivable but was not probable that it would reach forty billions or fifty billions before the war ended.

In 1910, at the time of our last census, our national wealth was one hundred and eighty-seven billions. To-day it is two hundred and fifty billions.

Part of the sum we charge against ourselves as war debt is, in reality, a credit for it represents loans we have made to our Allies, loans which will be repaid with interest and which, in addition, will bring trade as never before. Part of our war debt also is for ships which will form a mercantile marine of immense profit later in developing world commerce for America. The ultimate sum we pay on account of the war may approximate the highest estimate given if we include the interest but here again we have a credit for of the bonds bought by the American people the interest comes back to the people.

There are twenty-two thousand four hundred and sixty-two millionaires in America. Their aggregate wealth exceeds sixty-eight billions of dollars or approximately as much as the combined war debt of Great Britain and Germany.

There are wise men who predict that America will pay its war debt within ten years out of the economies due to the war.

War has made the American people know more of thrift and its virtues than they ever imagined.

War has taken much of the slack or, rather, the waste, out of American business.

This old world has weathered all the storms heretofore. The present disturbance has been the worst of all, but the world will right itself. Have no doubt of that.

Cheer up.

The Jeremiahs are not the prophets to believe.

The optimists are the men who blaze the paths to prosperity.

WHEN FOCH GOT READY

VIRTUALLY, all his life long Ferdinand Foch had been getting ready for his supreme task of conquering the dragon of autocracy. More than twenty years ago he was preparing for his triumph against the archenemy of his country. In the nineties many military experts made note of the fact that the French armies experienced a new impetus and underwent a vast change. A cleansing and rejuvenating influence was at work that was like a purifying fire.

It was Foch—Foch together with Joffre. Primarily, it was Foch who destroyed the cult of Moltke, the German war idol, whose methods of strategy had been held as inviolate and invulnerable. Foch substituted for the deposed fetish another and utterly opposite concept. Under his leadership the younger element of the French General Staff applied itself to the study of Napoleon's secret instructions and memoranda in the national archives—documents which, it is said, contain the great warrior's notes on how he would have met and crushed his own victorious strategy had it been used against him.

Dominating the Ecole de Guerre, Foch furthermore deliberately abolished the old brutal discipline advocated in the military system of Moltke, and in its place instituted the *discipline of the will to serve*, which had nothing of compulsion save that generating in the soul of the fighter and having its roots in freedom and honor. Thus, self-discipline was taught as the highest attribute of the soldier. Obedient to this tenet of Foch, the French student deliberately imposed upon himself every strain of discipline that the German soldier was subserviently compelled to endure by the brutality of his superior officers, and even compelled himself to cultivate qualities that were not naturally his. As an instance of this, the French soldier schooled himself to phlegm, adding it to his fighting powers.

Long ago, Foch realized that a nation's psychology was the driving force of its strategy and the sole creator of mastery in battle, and his recreation of the French strategic which permeated the spirit of his people was to be the decisive factor in any struggle with the Teuton foe.

The influence of Foch and Joffre at this period of military reformation was incalculable, and eminent students of strategy have said that it was then that they won their war. At any rate, it was then that France attained to a fresh and powerful confidence in herself, and vowed to die to a man rather than that the German should ever again prevail against her.

The First Battle of the Marne was the answer of the new strategic to that of the old.

WHAT DOES IT PROVE?

THERE is a phase of that new and profound study, psychoanalysis, that has caught our vagrant fancy. It has to do with suddenly confronting a subject with the name of something and asking him or her to tell what it suggests to his or her mind, the subject of the experiment to answer immediately without deliberate thinking. We believe that this subtle inquisition has been used on criminals. It is supposed that the answers give a clew to the mind under examination and may afford an inkling to the habits and thought of the victim. In our enthusiasm and innocence we determined to try out the psychic questionnaire, on a small scale, among a few random fellow men in the course of a day's activities. The words we chose for our probe into the souls of our acquaintances were: "apple," "key," "pipe," and "lamp."

Our first ego to explore was that of a politician. Replying to our four items, he said that an apple made him think of Adam and Eve, that a key brought to mind his loss of one many years before which resulted in a funny predicament, that a pipe called up the vision of a plumber, and that a lamp made him think of Aladdin.

The second individual we tackled was a waiter. He said an apple suggested William Tell to him, that a key brought forth a piano, that a pipe of course made him think of tobacco, and that a lamp somehow gave him a picture of a black eye he once had.

Number three said he was a cashier in a bank—that an apple made him recollect a stomachache he had when a boy, that a key meant Benjamin Franklin to him, that a

pipe caused him to visualize Old King Cole, and that a lamp likewise made him think of old Diogenes.

Frankly, we got no result from trying to piece together these answers which were not related very much to one another in any of the individual cases, for on further inquiry we ascertained that the politician was not religious, which his answer of Adam and Eve might imply; presumably he had no experience with a plumber, being a bachelor living in a sumptuous hotel; and he had never read any fairy tale in his life. Similarly, the waiter knew nothing of music, he did not smoke a pipe, cigars being his favorite form of fumatory vice, nor was he much of a fighter, according to general report. The bank cashier was not particularly fond of history or the classics, as his more or less connected answers might lead one to infer. As for the stomachache, we were in a quandary as to its psychic bearing on his character, as a majority of us have suffered a like experience.

We had a happy idea in spite of our failure to read the riddles of the mind. Our wife might give us the sought-for light and clew to this baffling process of artless cross-examination. We put the questions to her.

The apple made her think of Newton. The key brought Bluebeard into her mind. A pipe suggested a sewer. A lamp meant oil.

Now for the analysis: We had never heard her mention Newton before, and did not suspect she knew anything of the specialist in gravitation. And, of course, every wife knows about Bluebeard. We have never had an occasion to deal with a sewer. Our only gleam was the last reply about lamp and oil. It meant she was a housewife!

But we are far from sure that the questionnaire was a success. What do you think?

TEACHING HYGIENE IN CHINA

ONLY too well do we know that China and its bordering lands are the fountain-head of infection from which great epidemics have swept over the globe. Small-pox, cholera and plague here take their rise in terribly congested country where sanitation has no part in public policy. Some authorities have claimed that our latest and worst epidemic, the so-called Spanish influenza, may be laid to the pestiferous agency of the Chinese ignorance of hygiene.

Medical-missionary societies have done and are doing great work in China in enlightening the natives as to personal cleanliness and the general care of the body, and the value of antiseptic and prophylactics are being taught to the population. Many American organizations with this noble object in view are doing their best to offset the benightedness of the Chinese in such respect, but the work is stupendous, as one may easily see when it is realized that a race of five hundred million are to be turned from ancient ingrained ideas and converted to modern and, to them, strange practices.

One American has accomplished marvelous results with his method of teaching hygienic truths to the Celestials. His name is Doctor William Wesley Peter, a Toledo man. Seven years ago he went to China to lecture to the people on popular scientific subjects. But he was not long in appreciating the crying need for education in simple everyday hygiene. "Why not talk on health?" he asked his coworkers. From that moment it became his fixed idea.

Familiar with the childish character of the Chinese, who put eyes on their junks and locomotives to see and knowing their love of toys and magic, Doctor Peter evolved an original and delightful scheme to interest them by means of puppets and legerdemain machinery. His plan met with wonderful success. At present he travels about the provinces like a showman, his paraphernalia taking up six big Chinese wheelbarrows. The natives of a town notified that he will give a "performance" flock to see and hear him.

The toys and other devices are of the kindergarten variety. There is a bell that clangs for every death from tuberculosis, and a clock face registers the total for the different countries of the world, showing the prevalency of the disease in China. There is a trick table with cunningly hidden wooden figurines that pop up at the right instant of the lecture to show the populations of various countries per square mile, and their birth and death rates. There are chains with strong and weak links to illustrate certain facts of national health. There are toy pyramids and little ladders that illustrate vital mat-

ters. There are numerous dolls that play important rôles in the lecture. One of them representing China is weak and shrunken, with drooping head. Suddenly the magician-doctor applies "therapy," and the figure straightens up; then he applies "education," and the head of the manikin expands to noble proportions; then he applies "moral training," and gleams of intelligence shine out of *China's* eyes. Of course, it is all done with compressed air and electric wires, but the lesson inculcated is vivid and lasting.

We are of the opinion that Doctor Peter deserves the widest recognition and support in his unique and humanitarian work.

GOOD FORM

I WAS in my bath when a signal reading 'Raise steam for full speed with all dispatch' was handed me. Luckily, I was already shaved but, even so, my finishing dressing and breakfasting within twelve minutes was a creditable performance of its kind. I can't say much for the toilet I made, but the breakfast was a hearty one, with porridge, eggs and marmalade."

So reads a portion of the report of Captain Walter Ellerton of the British cruiser *Cornwall* regarding the historic sea fight off the Falkland Islands, one of the greatest sea battles of history, in which the fleet of Von Spree was destroyed and the South Atlantic and the South Pacific freed of German warships.

For typifying British character that report is delightful. It pictures the national addiction to that noble institution, the tub. It typifies, too, the national matutinal meal —porridge, egg and marmalade. Only the rasher of bacon is missing.

"Luckily I was already shaved," says the captain.

We may smile at this, but why should we smile?

One of the greatest soldiers of our revolutionary war, "Mad" Anthony Wayne, was much like Captain Walter Ellerton in character. Wayne was the Beau Brummel of the Continental army. He was a dandy beyond compare. He was the best-dressed soldier of Washington's command. His troops, the Pennsylvania line, were the most carefully groomed of the motley force that fought for liberty.

Before battle Wayne always bathed and shaved. So did his men.

"When I go to the throne of the Creator I want to go clean," said Wayne.

Ellerton reminds us of the dashing Wayne.

POPULAR TOPICS

PEACE problems and reconstruction bristle with difficulties of every description, but there is little doubt that the United States will meet any and all emergencies and demands. Our amazing powers of organization which were evident in our war tasks guarantee future performance involving the same qualities. There is no cause for worry. The American people do not fail. Admittedly the most complex question will be labor employment and remuneration under peace conditions, but many high authorities are of the opinion that the demand for it will be intensified in the rehabilitation of Europe, and our workers hitherto required in the service of war may, in all likelihood, have a chance to rebuild the devastated places across seas.

HOW great that devastation is can hardly be grasped by those who have not witnessed it. André Tardieu, the French high commissioner to America, gave us an inkling of its scope when he said that in France alone some three hundred and fifty thousand homes had been destroyed, which to restore would take about six hundred million days of work, at a probable expense of two billion dollars. And he added that his country had lost one-fifteenth of its population, counting two million and a half men dead or incapacitated—that many hands powerless to toil. It would not be surprising, then, if many Americans fared forth in a labor crusade.

BY the time this paragraph reaches the eye of our readers the long-projected air-plane trip across the Atlantic may have taken place. It won't be long before travel in the air will be as common as automobiling. Besides the feat in itself, which will bring about a tremendous change, there is a whole new field of speculation open as to the "rights of the air." Laws and treaties regarding it will be in order. Some of the most interesting questions are: 1. Is the air susceptible of ownership? 2. Who may be the owner of the air? 3. If any one may be its owner, what kind of ownership may he exercise? 4. Is there an aerial zone? A learned economist, Teodoro Rodriguez, has said: "The air, like everything that is inexhaustible, is wanting in value, as it is not desired by anybody, since no one desires what he possesses and has at his disposal in a superabundant quantity to such an extent that he can never be in want of it." But the air has taken on great new values owing to the development of the air plane.

JUST now, however, the ships of the air do not begin to rival their sisters of the water. To take care of foreign trade the redistribution of tonnage became one of the first necessities of the reconstruction era. Ships—and more ships—will be needed for a long time. And men to man them. Chairman Hurley of the Shipping Board announced when the armistice was signed that the merchant marine could use one hundred thousand men at once!

SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE HOUSTON also sent out an appeal for the further organization of all agricultural agencies in the country, to exert themselves to the utmost toward the crops of 1919. Happily, the fall planting of winter wheat is even larger than that of a year ago, which was forty-two million one hundred and seventy thousand acres. A large acreage of rye was also planted. Secretary Houston particularly points out the need of increased production of beef and fats. That is perhaps the most urgent necessity facing a world half starved.

IT is seldom of late that we have encountered any sympathy for the farmer's lot. He is supposed to be very well off, and ride round in his own auto. But C. W. Barron in his book "The Mexican Problem" incidentally gives another side. We quote him:

"He has no eight-hour day; he competes with women and children who put no price on their labor; his surplus products are dumped, almost as refuse, his milk to the milk contractor, his potatoes to the starch factory. He has no storage for apples, when, in an abundant season, they are not worth the price of the barrel. Heaven's sun itself appears to compete with him. He has never been taught that there is only one wealth for the farmer, and that is large storage backed by broad acres, quickly cultivated by machinery. His redemption cannot come through the parcel post or smooth-oiled roads for city motors, or by State and national agricultural bureaus. The redemption of 'the man with the hoe' will come through the gasoline motor that will plow spring and fall, cultivate all summer, chop wood in the winter, and not 'eat its head off.'"

ACCORDING to the *American Machinist*, standardization has been overdone to the point of faddism, particularly in the manufacture of motor trucks and air planes. Interchangeability used to be the bugaboo, but standardization has taken its place. Which only goes to show once more how a good thing may become an evil in the hands of hobby riders.

ONE of the finest suggestions for memorial to our soldier dead has come from the American Forestry Association, which proposes to plant "victory oaks" and "victory elms" throughout the land in commemoration of their devotion and sacrifice. A living memorial is a beautiful and significant tribute to our heroes.

Ten Years Deep

By L. J. Beeston
Author of "The Master Touch," Etc.

In which is related one of the most remarkable episodes in the life of Filson Straws—a meeting that he looked forward to for years, and dreaded with growing terror

WHEN he heard that announcement, those simple words, "A person to see you, sir," the weight which had been pulling his heart down for so, so long, became suddenly doubled, bringing a physical pang which burned the health in cheeks and lips to ashes, and the color of ashes.

"A person?" echoed Filson Straws, after his servant.

"Yes, sir. He would not give a name, but insisted on seeing you."

Of course it was Legree—Harney Legree. It was not that the servant had used the noncommittal word which would describe him; it was rather a swift intuition which stabbed Filson with the realization that the thing he had so long eluded would be eluded no more.

"Let him come up, James," said he briefly.

Immediately upon the soft closing of the door the occupant of the study laid his half-finished cigar upon a groove in the brass ash tray on the huge and magnificently carved ebony desk before him. Then he got up and stepped swiftly to the mirror over the mantelpiece. This was a superb piece of glass, but then everything in this lofty room was of a high grade, and intensely comfortable.

He put his eyes close to the ghostly image which the crystal presented to him. He pinched his cheeks, set his strong teeth into his lips to call up the reluctant red of his blood. The door handle rattled in a grasp, and Filson Straws turned.

With a firm, strong step his visitor entered the room. He wore a square-cut, dark-blue serge, coarse, welted shoes, and held a bowler hat in his right hand. His ungloved hands were reddened by the sharp wind of the January night. His face was formed on rather strong lines, and the cold blue of his eyes did not suggest that many things could frighten this man.

Right enough, it was Harney Legree, but Filson did not call him so, for he nodded with a half smile and said: "You have come to see me on a chilly night, Jason. Take a chair."

He accompanied this invitation with a nod to a straight-backed chair against a wall; but the visitor chose that one as a place of rest for his hat. He came forward to expand his numbed palms to the fire, then dropped, not without a certain natural ease of manner, into a big divan chair by the side of the blaze. Slowly his keen blue eyes traveled round the room, absorbing the comfort of deep-piled rugs, the delicate loveliness of the water colors, the offer of intellectual delight on the well-packed bookshelves, the restful sheen from the silken-shaded lamp.

"It is very nice here," said he, in a deep, slow voice. "The noise of the West End traffic does not pass through those heavy windows. You might be in the heart of the country."

The other drew a long, a deep breath. He had to force a frown, to assume a reprimand of familiarity.

"Jason," he began, severely, "I do not expect——"

"Cut out the Jason," was the interrupting response. "You have used that long enough. You know perfectly well that I am Harney Legree."

Straws put out his hands and gripped the edge of the mantelpiece. The fire warmth streamed up over his cold face. He looked sideways at his visitor, who was staring calmly and reflectingly into the blaze. He went back to his chair by the huge ebony desk and sank into it. A pallid and quivering thread from his still-burning cigar rose

up straight as a column between him and his visitor.

The latter looked round at last. He repeated:

"You know that I am Harney Legree, Straws?"

"Certainly, I know it."

"You found that out just fifteen months ago, I believe?"

"Approximately—yes."

"And all that that means to you—you have not attempted to deceive yourself in regard to that?"

"Not for one moment."

"You understand clearly that all this ease and comfort which surrounds you is not really yours at all?"

"It is not."

"And that I have a right to call it mine?"

"Unquestionably."

"Under the terms of Anthony Legree's will?"

"Under those terms."

"And no doubt my reason for keeping out of all these good things is known to you?"

"Perfectly."

"That for nearly three years I have been escaping the law?"

"I am aware of it."

"And that it is impossible for me to claim my right without disclosing the fact that I am not a dead man, as is believed?"

"Quite impossible."

"Which disclosure would mean anything between five and ten years in an American penitentiary?"

"Certainly that."

"Good. I see we have got the preliminaries."

Harney stretched out his legs on the rug and produced a pipe and tobacco pouch from a side pocket. Straws sat watching him, his left arm resting upon the ebony desk, his delicate, white hand just rising and falling as he answered those questions which beat, each one of them, like a hammer blow upon his suffering heart.

Suddenly the sound of a pianoforte came down from the room above this one. Some one was executing, with rare and mobile touch, the "Barcarolle" of Moskowski. Legree lifted his head, listening intently.

"That is very nice," said he. "Who is the player?"

"My daughter Olive."

"Ah! I saw her with you one afternoon in the Green Park. She is a beautiful slip of a girl, that. But why does she impart a sadness to that piece? Then you have a boy, Straws, I believe? Where is he?"

"At Cambridge."

"So was I. Did you know that?"

"I have heard so."

"At Caius. Oh, what a damned long, long time ago that seems! Heaven and earth, what drafts of life I have drunk since then! But I haven't come here to utter sentiment. Far from it. You and I have been dodging the point at issue for too long. I propose to settle it everlastingly before I leave this room. In fact, I mean to."

He screwed his shoulders into the back of his chair, tossed one leg over the other, gritted his teeth on his pipe.

"The situation is unique," he went on. "It bristles with perplexity. The bristles warded me off for fifteen months because I didn't want to prick myself. Now, just you listen with both ears.

"When I got into that sad mess in the States—we need not discuss that unpleasantness—I dived into obscurity like a scared rabbit. You see, I had got into a bank after office hours, and unluckily I had been given away. I was wanted bad. The police were sniffing on my trail. The one way to get them off was to make them abandon it. I contrived that by working an idea which was quite one of the smartest of the many questionable ideas I have developed. It made me a 'dead' man. The police found what they thought was the remains of poor me in a shack on a deserted ranch, dead of smallpox, in the fly season, with the glass steady over a hundred in the shade. You follow? No foul play, bear in mind; only the police made a mistake which I meant them to make.

"I came to England a year and a half later, very much incog, and intending to remain so, naturally. But I couldn't resist one or two inquiries into the old life I had left here, and I soon got a high-tension shock that made me sit up. It seems that I needn't have quit the Sunday-school side of the law at all in that bank-bustin' business, since, on the very eve of the adventure Uncle Anthony had expired and left me this more than snug nest in which you are so nicely coiled. True, his will stated that everything should pass to you should I die without any family of my own; but then, as you perceive, I am most uncommonly alive.

"Yes, I discovered that I am entitled to

—to all this I see round about me. But between me and this niceness is an abyss. Impossible to jump across it. Let Harney Legree claim his property, and the police of America will be looking after an extradition order. I say, one can't jump across this infernal abyss, but one can pass *through* it. You get me, of course. Well, I am coming to that.

"The next thing I discovered when poking my nose about here was that you had seen and recognized me. You would do that more easily than others, and then there is a picture or two of me in this house which doubtless helped to jog your memory. And I soon knew you were on the scent, Straws, because you employed a man to find out as much as he could about me. I spotted him first time. All he found out was that I was plain Jason, an engineer's assistant Shoreditch way—which was a job I got, having to live.

"By James! I was more than interested in the situation! I wondered ever so what you would do. The bank bustin' was known here, having drifted across. Was I afraid? Not much I wasn't! You could never expose me, for that would mean your own ruin. By all the rules of the cards, Straws, you ought to have dropped me like a white-hot bar. Yet you didn't. My presence in London worried you fearfully. Or else you have a conscience! What does a conscience feel like, Straws? Or perhaps you were nervous, scared, unable to make up your mind? Anyhow, you used your man as a sort of intermediate, and without showing your hand you managed to materially improve my position. That was your conscience. Good. Perhaps you were not sleeping well o' nights?

"Now it was perfectly clear to me that you believed I was ignorant of the fact that I had been left a fine property. I had presumably dived into the underworld, had cut myself off from all who knew me, from old associations, had become a dead man, in short. You argued that the truth of my good fortune had not drifted down to me. You must have argued on those lines, because otherwise you would have expected me round early to do a little blackmailing. But I have never got quite down to blackmail.

"In the meantime you regarded yourself enjoying all these good things which you had no real right to handle. I guess you said—'I can adjust this affair; I can pass on the property all right, all right; but shall I, who am doing only good things with it, educating my children, putting my name to permanent contributions, hand it over to a criminal to waste? Besides which, the handing-over process will send this poor devil headfirst into a long imprisonment.'

"This was the sort of sop you spooned to yourself. Suddenly the worst happens; the bomb bursts; your felon tears off his mask. Here he is, sitting in your chair, before your fire—pardon, in *his* chair, before *his* fire."

To all this Filson Straws had listened in stillness and in silence. Each rising word he crushed back; the smallest bodily movement he controlled. What sort of duel was this he was called upon to face? The thrill and the terror of it demanded all the composure he could muster. He was silent for a long time, and then he said:

"I will not question your general statement of the case. You have, of course, something further to say."

"Everything. I have spent hours, days, weeks in considering whether it would be worth while for me to face the music; to declare myself Harney Legree, very much alive; to swallow all the gruel I shall receive, and then to claim—all this. Now I can make up my mind pretty smartly in most things, but the devil take me if I can come to a lasting decision in this. It isn't that I mind shoving you out. Good God, no! And the prospect of becoming a man of comfortable means is a live prospect, with a good big kick in it. Still, they'd send me up the river in the States for a tidy long term of years before I could enjoy what would come after. That would be exceedingly unpleasant. One spells that kind of thing with four letters, beginning with an H. I reckon I should get seven years of prison." He turned sociably to his listener. "Do you think they'd serve me out more than seven?"

"Perhaps."

"What is the minimum you consider I'd get?"

"I cannot tell you."

"More than seven, maybe? Ten? Twelve?"

"Possibly."

"Thank you for nothing. Suppose we call it ten. Now I don't want to do ten years. I shouldn't be so young when I came out. And then there's a girl across the Atlantic I want to marry. I should lose her.

And she counts a good deal in this transaction. In fact, it was thinking so much of her lately that made me decide to come to you and have a heart-to-heart talk."

"You mean to make a proposition. I have been waiting for it."

"Give me a couple of thousand pounds and I'll let you alone to enjoy the rest."

"I refuse."

"Fifteen hundred, then?"

"Certainly not."

"A thousand—the limit, mind?"

"I will not give you fifty."

"What? Not out of my own estate?"

"Not out of your own estate."

"But—hell alive! I can claim the whole boiling, if I choose?"

"Claim it."

"Ah! I see your drift, Straws. You think I cannot prove it?"

"I am certain you can. Certainly, I should not combat your claim. I will even help it, if that be necessary."

At that Legree sat up and stared at the other. The eyes of the two men met, and for a full minute they just looked at each other in a profound silence. Legree grunted and leaned forward to knock the ashes from his pipe. Very slowly and meditatively he reloaded the bowl. It was a pause in the duel, both opponents falling back with lowered points.

"Obviously, you don't trust me," said Harney at last.

"Put yourself in my place," was the quiet answer.

"But I assure you that when I ask for a thousand pounds I am very much in earnest."

"That I believe."

"Well, having that amount I shall be entirely satisfied, and you will never be troubled by me again. Damn it, man, this is not in the nature of blackmail! I am asking for a bit of my own—and a beggarly trifle at that."

For the first time Filson Straws shifted his position. He wheeled his chair round so that he faced his desk, resting his arms upon it and steadfastly regarding Legree.

"You mean that," he responded quietly. "You *will* be satisfied—*for the present*. But as sure as you are sitting there the time will come when you will want a bigger handful. The knowledge that all this is yours will never let go of your brain. And then you will come for more. I know it. In a fashion, I allow that this is not pure blackmail; but then, in another fashion, it is. You will want a second thousand, then a third, and so on. You will bleed me slowly and surely."

"Of what is not yours?" cut in Legree hissingly.

"Admitted. I never denied that. But I strongly object to being bled through years and years of my life. It will lead to an intolerable situation which will inevitably destroy my peace of mind, which will strike at the happiness of my wife and children, which will end in utter disaster. Remember, also, that I should possibly be acting illegally in helping you—a wanted man; yet that scruple would not necessarily govern me, since your wrong was not against the laws of this country. But to talk of that is to waste time."

Harney Legree gripped the arms of his chair. Into his eyes came a fierce, a searing glare. He half rose, then allowed himself to sink back, slowly. The heat of sudden fury faded. He even laughed softly.

"All right," said he coolly. "This refusal makes up my mind for me. I will go through the fire and enjoy my fortune later."

Straws, pale as death, made no response.

"Do you think I'm afraid?" flashed Legree.

Filson was still silent.

"Answer, curse you!"

"Candidly, I think you are. Understand, however, if you can, that I do not want to build upon your fear."

"You lie, Straws. But I'll make you disgorge! Damn me, if I let you keep a moldly penny."

There was no answer.

"If you are so confoundedly virtuous, why didn't you give me to justice when you saw me in England, alive?"

"Pardon, I have not pleaded virtue."

"Or perhaps—yes, I see the card up your sleeve," exclaimed Harney with a sudden gesture. "You fancy that the will, in the special circumstances, will be quashed. You imagine that my crime and what will follow will oust me from my right!"

"Why should it? I have yet to learn that is the law. You will have purged your offense."

"Then I will sell you my claim. I'll let you buy, for a thousand pounds, all that is due to me?"

"You cannot, without disclosing yourself."

"Oh, curse you and your cold-blooded reasons. I wonder how long it would have taken you to give me away if it hadn't meant the loss of a fortune to you?"

Straws uttered a long and shuddering sigh which seemed to rise up from the depths of his heart. "That simple cutting of the rope is the only way," he answered despondingly. "We may talk and talk, but undo this knot we never shall."

"Hear him!" cried Legree with a harsh, a bitter laugh of derision. "Why didn't you save yourself these pangs by communicating with the police?"

Stung to the quick, Straws sprang from his chair, and leaning toward Harney, his palms upon the table, he said, with intense earnestness:

"Behind your back I couldn't. But I'll do it now, if you give me permission. Give me that, and I'll end, for both of us, this intolerable situation."

"Heroic!" snarled the other.

"Say the word, Harney!"

"And you'll fling away your property? You liar. You are not capable of it. No man would be."

"Am I not? Am I not? Will you give me your permission to communicate with the police?"

"Yes!"

Legree spat out the word, turning in his chair and fixing a look of blazing defiance upon Filson.

At that moment the pianist over their heads entered upon the "Autumn" of Chaminade. Involuntarily both men listened. Down upon their excited passion floated the rising moan of the after-summer gale, the scurry of the yellowed leaves, the lament of the trees, and that wild, bizarre chorus of bereavement.

And all this insurgence of sound beat upon Filson's heart, and he felt a dew break upon his forehead, upon his hands, and for an instant things rocked this and that way before his eyes. This moment he stood a man of means, with full appreciation of all that that meant. His son's career was dawning full of promise, his wife and daughter as happy as they were unconscious of the sword impending. Ten seconds later—no more, and——

The gibing voice whipped him again.

"You liar!" repeated Harney.

Straws straightened himself. He gave the other a single glance, then stepped across the room to the telephone on a bookshelf in a recess. He lifted the receiver.

"Give me the police station," said he curtly.

He waited.

Legree laughed. He called out: "Don't merely ask them to send an officer round. Tell them who is here. Tell them to send for *me*."

"Very good," answered Straws.

He still waited. The connection was made.

"Is that the police station?" questioned Straws. "I want to speak to the inspector in charge. That is the inspector? Well, I have——"

"Stop!" rapped out Legree. "I have thought of something. Put him off."

Straws handled the situation with presence of mind. He continued: "Will you be on duty for an hour, inspector? I should like to come round and see you about a certain matter. Many thanks."

He hung up the receiver, not easily, for in his shaking grip it rattled against the clips. He turned and resumed his seat by the table.

Harney stood in front of the fire, his hands clasped behind him, puffing very composedly at his short brier. A moment ago he had been on the brink of a precipice ten years deep; yet it did not appear to have jarred his nerve. He said, with a laugh:

"I take back the 'liar,' Straws. You meant to do it, and I didn't think it possible. You're game, I admit. Mind you, I think you are a fool, but you are not without pluck."

Filson merely replied by a curious glance at the other's easy attitude. Harney went on, in growing good humor:

"By now we have taken the other's measure."

"You have got mine," answered Straws, with indifference.

"By James, I have! And I mean to return the compliment. Just now I named a thousand pounds as my rock-bottom limit. I'll knock a chunk off even that. I'll call it seven hundred."

"I cannot agree."

"Five hundred, then?"

"You are wasting your time."

"Oh, be damned to your obstinacy!" growled Harney. He turned and spat into

the fire. A long silence ensued, broken only by a gurgling sound from Legree's over heated pipe.

"Is it possible," continued the visitor reflectively, "that it is the cash you are considering? Is it possible that you, having all, cannot bear to part even with that beggarly fraction?"

"You are wrong there. We are going round and round in a circle," answered Straws, very wearedly.

"It is simply that you are afraid of me?"

"It is simply that I steadfastly decline to admit the thin end of a blackmailing wedge."

"But I am not a blackmailer. I abhor that sort of crawler as much as you do. Do the handsome thing by me, and you shall not see my pretty face again this side of the doom crack. That I swear."

"And again I answer that I cannot accept your word."

"But see how hard it is on me!"

"That I admit. I am in your shoes here, Harney, but what can I do? It is for you to act. The remedy is in your own hands. I have shown you that I do not shrink, but you—but you——"

"Ah, you think I am less plucky in the matter than you?"

Filson wiped his pallid forehead.

"Because I interrupted your phone call, you put it down to cowardice? Now I am going to show you, my son, that it was nothing so yellow. We will conduct this business like sportsmen. What is wanted to solve the riddle is a little respect for each other. That is it! Look you, Straws, if you could trust me as I want you to, would you really give me a thousand pounds out of the estate?"

"No. I would be more just. I would give you five thousand," was the instant rejoinder.

"You would?" flashed Legree.

"Yes, I would. It would be a somewhat crooked arrangement, but the nature of the case is so extraordinary. I am enjoying what is not my own, yet I cannot end it without putting you in a prison."

Legree put his pipe down upon the mantelpiece. "Good," said he brusquely. "We have now arrived at the idea which came to me when you were phoning the inspector. I am bound to say I admired your display of grit, and I want to compel a like compliment from you without absolutely damning myself for sure. You shall see I am as earnest and consistent as you. Give me a sheet of writing paper, and an envelope, and a stamp for postage."

Full of wonder and perplexity, Straws obeyed. The other jerked a chair to the table and for a couple of minutes was busy with a pen. When he had finished he read out, aloud, as follows:

"To the superintendent of the criminal investigation department, New Scotland Yard:

"This is to inform you that the writer of this note is George Harney Legree, wanted in the United States of America for a bank robbery committed in Indiana three years back, and wrongly believed to be dead. His address is Number 22, Harkaby Street, Shoreditch, known there as William Jason."

Harney folded and placed this message in an envelope, which he directed and sealed, and pushed forward for Straws to see. He continued, coolly:

"If Scotland Yard gets this it will know what steps to take. I shall not run away from that address, which you know is mine; but it would not help me to bolt, for they would soon get after me. Now I want you, Straws, to write me a check for five thousand pounds. You probably haven't that much at your bank, on your running account, but you can date it ahead for a few days during which time you can place the cash ready for me to withdraw. To say that I trust you is to pay you an idle compliment. Please put the slip in an envelope like this and address it to my poor but honest residence at Harkaby Street."

For half a minute Filson hesitated, frowning and perplexed. Then he obeyed. Legree took both addressed and sealed envelopes and placed them side by side on top of the bookcase by the side of the telephone. He then laid a sheet of blotting paper upon the two envelopes. After this he went back to his pipe.

"Here it all is," said he curtly. "Press your bell and call your man. Tell him to lift the paper, take up one of the two letters underneath, without asking a single question, and to go straight across the road to the pillar box at the corner—and *drop it in*. You get me?"

"I—I imagine that I do," murmured Filson, very white.

"Good man! You perceive that I am not a whit more afraid than you are. It is only that I hate to go to jail for ten years if the matter between us can be arranged otherwise. But if it can't be arranged other-

wise, then I'll go to prison—and that is my ultimate, last, and final word! My scheme gives you a chance, and it gives me an equal chance. Nothing but it will show you how much in earnest I am, and yet leave open a way out for us both. If you regard it as the method of a blackmailer, as the idea of one who will come again and again to bleed you white, then tear up both check and letter. If not, call your man."

And Harney reloaded his pipe with care and lighted it with still more care.

Filson Straws touched the button of an electric bell.

James appeared five seconds later.

"James," said Straws, in a tone which he endeavored in vain to absolutely control. "There is a sheet of blotting paper by the side of the phone."

"Yes, sir."

"There are two letters underneath it."

"Yes, sir."

"Please take one of them—any one you like, without asking questions. Take it instantly to the box across the road and drop it in. You perfectly understand me, James?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then do as I tell you."

Without a moment of hesitation the well-trained servant stepped to the bookcase. The action brought his back between him and the others. He lifted the covering blotting paper, picked up one of the envelopes, put back the blotting paper over the other, and went out, closing the door softly.

Straws pulled at his collar. Excitement was touching his heart. Harney blew an immense cloud. Both men went slowly to a window overlooking the street. Straws drew the blind aside. They looked down at the human flow, and in a few moments they saw James, hatless, crossing the road. He stopped at the pillar box at the corner; he dropped in the letter.

"Did you think I'd get cold feet at the last second?" laughed Legree.

Straws turned and stared at the bookcase. "You look," he whispered huskily.

"As you will," answered the other easily.

He stepped across the room and picked up the sheet of blotting.

"I'm a lucky swine," he laughed. "I'm five thousand pounds richer than when I came in!"

He handed the letter to the police to Filson, who tore it across and across and dropped it into the fire.

"Good-by, Straws," said Legree. "I'm going to marry my girl, who is worth all the rest of the money."

He held out his hand, and Filson put his into it.

"Good-by, Harney," said he tremulously.

When Straws found himself alone he looked round vacantly, absently. He was dazed. What an ordeal it had been! He thought of the inspector at the local police station, who was waiting. Well, he might wait! Mechanically, he moved toward his dead cigar which was resting on a groove in the brass ash tray on his table, and mechanically he applied a light to it.

It tasted bitter, spent, exhausted; but Straws did not notice that detail, for he inhaled, deeply, an acrid fume which seemed to him like those spicy breezes which "waft o'er Ceylon's Isle."

UNMISTAKABLE SIGNS

WHEN Speaker Champ Clark's children were babies, Mrs. Clark was proverbial among her friends and acquaintances for the skill with which she looked after the youngsters' health. On one occasion, however, she narrowly escaped employing the wrong kind of nurse for them.

"You know all about looking after little children?" she asked the old colored woman who had applied for the position.

"Yas, mum. Dar ain' nothin' dat I don' know 'bout chillun—dar ain' nothin'."

"I'm so glad," said Mrs. Clark pleasantly. "Now, let's see. Of course, you know about preparing the baby's bath?—the way to use the thermometer to tell how hot or cold the water is?"

"No'm," replied the nurse. "I ain' never fooled wid no thummometuhs. Dem things ain' no good noways. Ef de baby tu'ns red, I knows right dar dat de water's too hot; an' ef it tu'ns blue, I knows right off de water's too cold."

Anybody in the Audience!

By Robert McBlair

Author of "Never Irritate a Lion," Etc.

"Him a hypnotizer," said Fish Kelly. "Him a what?" echoed Lawyer Little. "A hypnotizer. He want to give a show," affirmed Kelly. And the fun began. The negro audience easily got more than its money's worth

FISH KELLY, his gangling frame clothed in black but a shade darker than himself, drifted mournfully into Queen Street, followed closely by the professor and his yellow assistant.

Lawyer Little, chin on chest, his balloon-like figure relaxed, his greasy opera hat resting bottom up on the brick sidewalk, was asleep in a chair in front of Benny Hooton's barber shop. Here the cavalcade came to a halt. Fish swallowed his exposed Adam's apple several times, then sank onto the edge of an adjacent chair. With uncanny swiftness the professor collapsed his great length into the remaining chair and fixed Lawyer Little with his dull eye. The other eye, very piercing and intelligent, was walled at an angle of twenty-five degrees, and launched a relentless stare upon Fish. The professor had that strange thing in a colored man, a meager Vandyke beard; and he had a gift for silence. Small cold things began scuttling up and down Fish's spine.

Fish's attention was attracted by the antics of Lawyer Little's somnolent face. Lawyer's eyebrows twitched and his flat, bacon-colored nose quivered. Suddenly his eyes opened, to find a dark man with long, bony features regarding him intently with one eye.

Lawyer sat bolt upright.

"What you want?" he demanded.

For answer the dark man silently took a blue silk handkerchief from the breast pocket of his gray swallowtail, then deliberately plucked his intelligent right eyeball from its socket, and began polishing it.

Lawyer leaped to his feet.

"For Gawd's sake!" he exclaimed.

Fish Kelly interposed a word of explanation.

"Him a hypnotizer."

"Him a what?"

"A hypnotizer. He want to give a show."

Lawyer recovered his dignity. He picked up his opera hat and smoothed it with a shiny green-black sleeve before putting it on. He sat down again and donned his ceremonial silver-rimmed spectacles.

"We gwine give a show," went on Fish nervously.

"We!" snapped Lawyer. "Who 'we?' "

Fish had hoped that Lawyer wouldn't adopt that attitude.

"Me," he faltered, "an' de professor, an' —an' you."

"If dere's a you in it, ain't goin' be no me in it," retorted Lawyer testily. "Ev'y time I done done anything wid you it done ended in trouble. You's a Jonah."

Fish swallowed nervously, his thin frame balanced on the edge of his chair like a black measuring worm.

"I seen him first," he protested weakly.

"What?" yelled Lawyer in his most threatening tone.

Fish was startled into a rising position. He moved to where there was free egress into space in several directions before he repeated:

"I seen him first. We done had it all fixed 'bout who gwine give de show. You kin ask——"

But as Fish indicated the professor for confirmation his voice failed him. That silent gentleman was refitting his right eyeball into its socket. The operation completed, the horrid orb fastened itself upon Fish with a chilling glare. Fish's jaw dropped. Without another word he turned and drifted down Queen Street, his black clothes flapping on his blacker frame, a moving picture of dejection.

He passed gloomily by the aromas of the Liberty Lunch Room; and a little farther on the even more seductive aromas of Hammer John's saloon left him cold. His finances, consisting of a nicked razor and a

pack of greasy cards, allowed of neither food nor drink. He followed his nose into Huntersville, where little black and tan children, with big eyes and dragging trousers, swarmed like beetles over the cobbles and hung, thumb in mouth, on the precarious railings of unpainted wooden dwellings.

Fish finally came to a halt opposite the big red gas house. A huge canvas tent had mushroomed up on the lot that usually was reserved for old tin cans, goats, and baseball games. Around the tent other tents had grouped themselves, and everything was bustle and hurry. That night would witness the opening of the Greatest Show on Earth.

Fish, his retreating chin hanging in wonder, shuffled nearer, and he was much startled when a tousled head projected itself from a tent flap and shouted:

"Hey, boy! Want a job?"

"What kinda job?" inquired Fish, immediately on the defensive.

"Easy work. Just toting water to the lions."

"To de what?" ejaculated Fish.

The white man grinned. "They can't get out. Just want you to clean a few cages and tote some water. Here."

The fellow emerged clumsily from the tent and extended a tin cup. "Take a swig of that and come on."

Fish sniffed, then grinned widely and emptied the cup.

"I'd be lion my own self ef I took much of dat!" he chuckled.

The man led the way into the big tent. Gangs of men were driving stakes, tightening guy ropes, erecting the grand stand with a great clatter of boards, raking sawdust and shaking down trapezes. His guide proceeded to an addition to the great tent and indicated the empty cages that were to be cleaned and furnished with straw and fresh water.

For two hours they worked, but Fish did not find the labor arduous. Whenever he felt weary, which was about every fifteen minutes, he would say:

"Dis mighty heavy work for a small man."

His companion, who was already several laps ahead, would immediately stop and produce one of the two flasks he carried and give Fish a drink, taking another drink himself: "Just to be friendly."

Presently, as dusk was gathering and the gas torches had not been lit, they began stumbling over ropes and bumping into each other, every mishap being greeted with uproarious laughter. The white man grew so weak with merriment and refreshment that he sank down with his back against a wagon wheel and extended Fish his keys.

"Go up that end cage and clean her out," he instructed. "Then we'll be finished."

Fish stumbled along the row of cages, and coming to a big one that was locked, unlocked the door and climbed in. It was rather dark except near the bars, but he started in with his rake. It seemed to him as he worked that he heard strange noises near by, but he did not locate their source till he lunged into a corner after straw. His rake hit something soft, he was deafened by a horrible roar: a huge form leaped out of the darkness and he saw a tremendous shaggy yellow head, lashing tail, and eyes of green fire.

"Great Gollys!" yelled Fish. He dashed to the door, but it was only ajar and his impact slammed it. He heard a movement behind him, and screaming aloud, he snatched open the door and leaped. Striking the ground, he dived under the tent. Outside a fat man tried to grab him as he passed, but he was not quick enough.

Fish fled through the exterior bustle like a bullet and, crossing a small ravine in the dusk, gained an inconspicuous road to town. Here presently he slowed and drew breath, although he kept strictly to the middle of the road and avoided all dark objects and shadows.

Liberty Hall was on the immediate outskirts of Huntersville. The hedge-bordered lane leading straight up to it at a turn in the road was so inviting, Fish was tempted to go in and take a nap. But his recent experience was not conducive to a night in a dark and lonely building; the inner man also interposed an argument; and Fish continued into Huntersville and turned down Queen Street, to find a crowd of colored folk gathered in front of Hammer John's saloon.

Fish pressed close, to see in the display window, instead of the usual fly-specked and cobwebbed bottles, a strange spectacle.

The professor's yellow assistant, a red gingham wrapper over his brown suit, was stretched out on his back inside the window, his eyes closed, his expression even more vacuous than usual, his hands folded upon his chest and clasping each a bunch of goldenrod.

It was an awe-inspiring spectacle. From the assistant's yellow shoes, with the toes rounded as if each concealed a doorknob, to his still and expressionless face, there radiated suggestions of occult mystery, considerably heightened by the goldenrod and the red gingham wrapper. The final touch was lent by a large hand-printed cardboard placard:

THIS MAN HIPNOTISED BY PROFESSOR BROWN. TO-NIGHT AT NINE O'CLOCK THE PROFESSOR GOING TO WAKE HIM UP AND HIPNOTISE HIM SOME MORE. HE WILL HIPNOTISE ANYBODY IN THE AUDIENSE FREE OF CHARGE.
COME ONE COME ALL
TO LIBERTY HALL
ADMISSION 15c. LADIES 10c.
SINGLE LADIES 5c.

Lawyer Little, carrying a small wooden box under his fat arm, pushed his way through the crowd and struck Fish on the back.

"Come on over an' git sup'n' t' eat off'n me!" he cried.

"I seen him first," replied Fish bitterly as he recovered from the blow.

"Come on, nigger. Me an' you is friends!"

Fish by nature was melancholy rather than vindictive; Lawyer could always handle him; and just now he was quite willing to relinquish his righteous asperity in favor of a square meal. He drifted in Lawyer's wake, and they sat down at a table covered with white oilcloth in the Liberty Lunch Room.

With the enthusiasm of the born promoter, Lawyer dilated on the success of the new idea, upon the number of tickets sold, and upon the personality of the professor.

"Dat sho' is a real sho' nuff hoodoo hypnotizer, dat man. Ev'y time I looks at him I sees a ghost."

"You right," laughed Fish, enlivened by the sight of corned beef and cabbage. "Dat man, he got a bad eye."

There fell a silence, broken only by the clink of knife on plate and by certain succulent inhalations.

The repast concluded, Lawyer pushed back his chair.

"Come on wid me," he directed. "I'm gwine give you a free ticket for nothin'. A frien' o' mine is a frien' o' mine."

The tall, thin, melancholy black man and the rotund, jovial, bacon-colored man made their way through the evening press of Huntersville, past the populous corner stores and the more populous saloons, along the lamplighted cobbled street with its infrequent trolley car, surrounded by the kindly, laughing, gun-toting, gay-hearted men and women and children of every shade of black and brown, dressed in every character of raiment.

At Liberty Hall, already a few stags and couples were on the porch demanding entrance, so Lawyer took their money and ushered them inside, lighting the gas and opening the windows on the sides of the square room with great show of hospitality. He then placed a small table at the door and officiated as the crowd grew larger.

"You must got a hundred dollars in dat box," Fish ventured.

"Ain't got nowhar near dat," returned Lawyer, remembering Fish's claims and not relishing the subject.

"You got a thousan', den," Fish compromised.

"A thousan' mo' dan a hundred, nigger."

"How long it been?" demanded Fish, batting his eyes.

"You de most argufyin' nigger in de world. Go on up dere an' take yo' seat on de platform."

"I ain't goin' on no platform all by myself."

"Dere's de professor now. Come on, we'll go in de stage entrance. Look at dat lightning! Glad everybody here 'fore de storm bust."

Seemingly all who were coming had arrived, so Lawyer left his post, and he and Fish joined the professor and his yellow assistant and two burly helpers at the stage entrance. One of the helpers carried a large ironing board.

Lawyer unlocked the door and they filed into the small space behind the stage, hidden from the audience by the paper walls of the stage room.

From the auditorium came the constant murmur of conversation rippled by laughter, and the imminence of so many staring eyes tautened all the actors in the grip of nervousness. Their faces wore strained grins, all except Fish, who sank deep into

melancholy and stood in a corner like a stick of tar with two large white eyes.

Lawyer, perspiring freely, went out on the stage and lighted the three gas jets for footlights, retiring hastily at the mingled applause, catcalls, hoots and whistles that followed his success in kneeling down and getting up again despite his avoirdupois.

"Take dese two chairs out dere," he instructed Fish.

Fish pouted his lips and glowered.

"I ain't studyin' 'bout no chairs," he replied.

The two helpers also refused point-blank, so Lawyer had to do this too. Amid renewed applause, he placed the chairs facing each other in the center of the stage about six feet apart. Next he brought out two more chairs and put one at each side of the platform near the footlights.

"You ready?" he asked the professor when he returned.

The professor nodded gravely, whereupon the two helpers, who had been coached in the back room of Hammer John's saloon, held one at either end the ironing board while the yellow assistant stretched himself in precarious balance upon it, folded his hands, and assumed an attitude and expression of somnolence.

"Aw right. What you waitin' for?" whispered Lawyer testily.

The two helpers, one backing, shuffled out on the stage with their burden and placed it upon the two chairs. The audience, which had begun buzzing as the two men came out, fell into awe-struck silence as it inspected the mysterious sleeper, now visible to them in full profile. The tension was decidedly heightened by a vivid flash of lightning, followed by a clap of thunder that reverberated across the heavens. From the auditorium came murmurs and grunts and moans, indicating deep interest.

Lawyer used force to get Fish from behind the scenes. Once in front of the footlights there remained nothing for Fish to do but collapse hastily into the nearer chair, where he entwined his large feet and gazed upon them in an anguish of dark embarrassment.

Next before the audience came Lawyer, who waddled out, nervously mopping his brow. He bowed and grinned at the flutter of applause and began his introduction.

"Ladies an' gemmen, fellow citizens, and brutherin an' sisterin in the church of Heaben," was his opening, and he at once captured his hearers.

"Professor Brown is one of de greatest an' foremost hypnotizers in de big world today. I trimbles, ladies and gemmen, when it comes to me sometimes what dat man could do wid his wonderful gift of magic if he warn't a good man."

The audience hearkened raptly as Lawyer paused.

"Don't he talk beautiful?" inquired one stout dark lady too loudly. She subsided with gigglings at being overheard.

"Yessuh," Lawyer continued, "I trimbles in my bed of a nights. Why, dis man could hypnotize de president of dis here United States an' make him go to sleep an' de country would come to a stock-still. He could hypnotize de engineer on a locomotive an' de train would jump de track.

"Why, dat man kin hypnotize ever'body in dis audience. He could hypnotize ever'body in dis city. He could hypnotize ever'body in de United States if he jes' set his mind to it."

Lawyer was interrupted by groans and grunts of interest and wonder.

"Ladies and gemmen," cried Lawyer with a dramatic gesture, "I asks you to look on Professor Brown, de greatest hypnotizer of de ages!"

Precisely at this moment the tall Professor Brown stalked into view, caressing the fringe of his Vandyke beard. Taking the center of the stage as Lawyer sat down, he reached within the breast pocket of his gray swallowtail and drew forth a blue silk handkerchief. Suddenly shaking his arms wide apart, as if to indicate that there was nothing in that sleeve and nothing in this sleeve, he slowly raised his right hand and plucked forth his piercing right eye from its socket. At almost the same time another flash of lightning rocked the heavens with its thunder.

The audience sat spellbound, then tossed like a sea. Ladies giggled nervously and cast glances at the door or at nearer windows. Some of the gentlemen frowned and looked threateningly about as if to say, "Who got me in dis place, anyway!"

The professor polished his eye, then replaced it with remarkable ease. He then turned swiftly, threw his long hands above his recumbent subject, and snapped his fingers.

The yellow assistant promptly sat up,

dropped his feet to the floor, and gazed around the hall with wide unseeing eyes.

In hollow tones the professor spoke.

"You is a cannibal! You is sittin' on de side of a grave eatin' de bones of yo' gran'-ma!"

Promptly the assistant reached down, made as if he broke off an arm or a leg, then began munching on it with relish.

Soon he paused, and with unexpected realism began picking his teeth.

The audience became seized with the animal magnetism of a moved crowd. Possibly vague ancestral memories of forest enemies, of painted voodoo men, of brown bodies gleaming in the firelit dance, stole into their transplanted brains. Some of them swayed slightly; others groaned. A rumble of thunder crossed the sky. From the direction of the road came two quick reports, like revolver shots.

The tenseness of feeling transmitted itself to the stage. Lawyer leaped to his feet and called hoarsely:

"Anybody in de audience! Anybody in de audience! Jes' step dis way if you wants de professor to conjure you! He gwine to have ever'body hypnotized in a minute!"

The professor snapped his fingers in his assistant's face.

"You sees a tiger!" cried the professor. "A wild roarin' tiger. Dar he, comin' in de door!"

The assistant leaped to his feet, crouching low, his hands raised in horror, his eyes distended.

The audience watched him breathlessly. Some even glanced over their shoulders, so realistic was his acting.

And then suddenly a change came over the manner of the occupants of the stage.

The assistant's jaw dropped and he seemed to turn from yellow to cream white.

Lawyer Little rose slowly from his chair.

The professor, who was facing Lawyer, turned to follow the fat man's gaze. The audience did likewise.

A bloodcurdling roar was heard.

Crouched in the doorway, red mouth open and white fangs bared, tail lashing, eyes darting green fire, was either a real or an imaginary lion.

The effect of his presence was the same in either case. The audience became like leaves in an autumn wind. The distinction was immediately lost between ladies and single ladies, between gentlemen who escorted ladies and gentlemen who had arrived alone. It was now distinctly an individual proposition, the question being how to get out of the hall in the shortest time and at a point the farthest from the doorway.

The windows became congested. Fat ladies illustrated the crushing force of weight, and developed an amazing ability to mount roofward on the bodies of victims. Dark, scrawny ladies showed to good effect the value of determination plus agility. Clothing was of use only as something to grab at.

The air became full of screams, and such breathless expressions as "Oh, Jerusalem!" "Quit your holding me!" "Leggo me, nigger, 'fo' I kill you!"

Fish had started toward the stage exit, but it was occupied by the struggling forms of the three principals. He turned to the auditorium, and suddenly was struck from behind by a large passing body, doubtless Lawyer Little. The impact was too unexpected. Fish plunged forward, tripped on the footlight board, turned a somersault in space, and heard something strike his chest with a jingle.

Then darkness.

It could not have been very long before he came to, because he could hear the retreating rumble of a cart or a cage, carrying with it the dwindling roars of a no longer free animal.

His knee struck something that clinked. He picked it up. It was the small wooden box that Lawyer had carried as treasurer. Its weight indicated clearly that it still contained the thousand or the hundred dollars taken in for tickets.

Fish began to feel less melancholy. He scrambled to his feet, tucked the box under one arm, and hastened down the hedge-bound lane to the road.

Here toward the right could be seen the lights of Huntersville, and dimly could be descried a man's moving figure, coming nearer; possibly a returning treasurer in search of his treasure.

Fish turned to the left, and keeping close to the concealing trees on the side of the road made swiftly away from Huntersville and in the direction of a certain hollow tree, known only to himself, where valuables might safely be stored.

If it had been any one else but Fish, his expression might have been described as positively cheerful.

The Country of Strong Men

By A. M. Chisholm

Author of "Precious Water," Etc.

(A Five-Part Story—Part Five)

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

GARLAND PLAYS A HAND.

AS Mr. Braden was quite sure that Garland had abstracted the deeds, he expected to receive a proposition from him. When this did not come he was puzzled. What was Garland waiting for? Was it possible that he was dickering with Mackay?

The result of this uncomfortable suspicion was that he began to sound Garland, speaking carelessly of Faith's claim to the property, ridiculing it. Garland, being by no means a fool, began to wonder why Braden recurred to the subject, and began to lead him on.

"What made her think she owned the thing?" he asked. "If her deeds are all right they ought to show her what's hers."

This confirmed Braden's suspicions.

"You heard Mackay say French gave them to her before he died."

"Yes, I heard that," said Garland. But if Braden kept insisting on those deeds there must be something crooked about them. If they had been made years ago, why hadn't they been handed over. And why was Braden talking to him? The only answer was that he must be supposed to know something which he did not. However, being a fair poker player he remembered that the bluff of a pat hand has been known to win. He shot at a big venture: "As long as she doesn't know any more than those deeds tell her, I guess she won't make you any trouble," he said.

There was no doubt at all in Mr. Braden's mind now about Garland.

"Look here," he said, "are you going to make trouble for me—I mean are you going to try to?"

Garland was amazed at the result of his random shot, but had no objection to picking up the bird thus fallen at his feet.

"Not if you do the fair thing," he replied.

"What do you call fair?" Mr. Braden demanded.

Garland was in deep water. Braden wanted him to put a price on silence. Well, he had no idea of the price Braden would be prepared to pay.

"Fifty-fifty," he replied at a venture.

"Fifty-fifty!" Mr. Braden echoed. "Why, you holdup, you sneaking safe robber, I'll see you damned first. Those deeds you stole aren't worth the paper they're written on."

Here was real news for Garland. Deeds had been stolen from Braden's safe. If they were the real deeds of the property and French and Braden had delivered bogus ones to that girl, then Braden was in a devil of a mess. And Braden thought *he* had them.

"I'll take a chance on that," he replied.

But Mr. Braden, since the loss of the deeds, had been busy mentally constructing a bomb-proof defense, and this had taken very nearly the form anticipated by Judge Riley.

"Then you won't get a nickel out of it," he told Garland. "They might make a certain amount of trouble, but that's all. I'm not going to be held up. You think because you stole that old note and statement of yours when you took the deeds that I've no strings on you? Well, you try anything and see."

Garland in his surprise nearly exposed his hand. Here was a rotten complication, which gave him a very live interest in the affair. While evidence of his old transgression was in Braden's hands he had been sure it would not be used. But now somebody else had it. Who would have an interest in taking it, as well as deeds affecting the coal lands? Obviously Mackay, who would like nothing better than to get something on him.

"Keep your shirt on," he advised Bra-

den. "Don't try to bluff me. You know if Mackay got hold of those papers it would raise the devil with you. They show who really owns the property."

"They are a mistake," Mr. Braden returned. "I mean they were drawn by mistake. French gave the girl her deeds."

Garland grinned. "Suppose he had given her the others, where would you be?"

"I'll give you a hundred dollars for them."

Garland merely laughed, and though Mr. Braden increased his offer to five hundred it was not accepted. He was reluctant to go higher, first, because it would show Garland that he considered the deeds worth real money; and second, because Garland did not seem anxious to press his blackmail.

Looking into the future Mr. Braden foresaw the possibility of a situation in which the possession of actual cash would be very convenient if not necessary. He might have to pay Garland a lump sum. Or, if he refused to do so and Garland made a deal with Mackay, he might have to stand a trial.

Meantime, Garland was making arrangements of his own. The job of obtaining anything from Angus Mackay was not going to be easy, and reluctantly he made up his mind that it was too big to be tackled single-handed. Assistance meant sharing the profits, but unfortunately it seemed to be a case. He thought of Poole, and would have preferred him, but Mr. Poole packed no sand whatever. Finally he decided on Blake French. Not that Blake had any too much courage, but he hated Mackay, and having rapped him on the head once, he might be counted on to do it again if necessary. Poole might be used for a scout, without telling him a great deal.

Blake French fell in with Garland's proposals with alacrity. He had had trouble with his brothers since his father's death, culminating in a short but vicious battle with Larry, in which the latter had got the best of it. He suspected his brothers of having funds which they refused to share with him. He himself was flat broke, without money to pay for his numerous drinks. His brothers treated him as an outsider. He was sure they were holding out on him. If he could get a share in that coal proposition he would have the laugh on them; also it would be a chance to get square with Mackay. And so he and Garland began to lay plans looking to the acquisition of the missing deeds. The matter seemed simplified for them by the circumstance that Angus Mackay and his bride were now living, temporarily at least, in her cottage on the dry ranch. This strengthened the hypothesis that Mackay had the deeds and was living close to the coal prospect in order to keep his eye on it.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE TURN OF THE SCREW.

If Mr. Braden had been puzzled by Garland's conduct in the first instance, he became more so. Garland made him no proposition. The thought that the latter might be dickering with the French boys crossed Mr. Braden's mind, but was open to the objection that he would have to share blackmail with them. On the whole, Mr. Braden concluded that he had bluffed Garland. After a while the latter would part with the documents cheaply.

Hence, when he received a visit from Judge Riley one day about the close of business hours, he was very little perturbed. Mackay perhaps had taken legal advice on his supposed rights, or the judge might have come on other business. But the lawyer's first words cleared up that point.

"I am here," he said, "on behalf of my client, Mrs. Mackay. You are aware that she claims ownership of the land on which coal has been found?"

"Her claim is nonsense," Mr. Braden asserted stoutly.

"That's just what I am trying to clear up. As a result of what French told her she always supposed she owned the land."

"I'm not responsible for what French told her. I'm getting tired of this absurd claim of hers. Her land is described in her deeds. That's her evidence of title. You ought to know that."

"Yes, I know that," the judge admitted mildly. "As it happens, she is now able to produce a deed from you to her father conveying the land in question."

It was so entirely unexpected that Mr. Braden's heart decidedly misbehaved. How in the name of all bad luck had this happened? Had Garland, after all, made a dicker with Mackay? Had Mackay got those infernal deeds? Or had he merely a suspicion, which Riley was trying to confirm by a fishing trip for a damaging admission?

"Nonsense!" he said.

"Oh, no," the judge replied cheerfully.

"To be quite frank with you, our position is this: French, shortly before his death, delivered to his niece a conveyance in duplicate from you to her father purporting to convey certain lands therein described. This land lies immediately east of the coal lands, but does not include them. But the other conveyance of which I spoke does include them. We claim that this latter conveyance is the true and original one."

"Where did you get it?" Mr. Braden demanded.

"Suppose French, feeling his end approaching, gave it to his niece?"

"He——" Mr. Braden began and checked himself suddenly. Riley was laying verbal traps for him. He must be careful. "If you have this conveyance, let me see it."

"You will see it at the proper time."

"You mean that you haven't got it," Mr. Braden charged.

The judge smiled. "You think I am trying to trap you into an admission. Nothing of the sort. I said we could produce the documents. The only difference between them and the others is the description of the property. Same date, same witness. It's useless to deny the existence of documents which I myself have seen."

There was no doubt that the judge was telling the truth. So Garland had sold out to Mackay. Mr. Braden's front trenches were carried, but he believed his second line to be impregnable.

"I'm not denying its existence. I know all about the thing, including the fact that it was stolen from me."

"The main thing is that it exists."

"It exists, but it is worthless."

"My clients consider it rather valuable."

"I suppose they paid for it, but they've been stung. When I sold that land to Winton, a clerk in my office prepared the deeds and got the description wrong. When I discovered the error I had new deeds prepared and executed, and they are what I suppose French gave to Winton's daughter. I supposed he had given them to Winton long ago. So there you are! You've found a mare's-nest, and that's all there is to it."

Judge Riley chuckled internally, though his face was grave. Braden was doing the obvious.

"Don't you compare conveyances before execution in your office?"

"Of course I do. But in this case the error was in the description which the clerk prepared and gave to the stenographer to copy. She copied it, and it was compared with what had been given her."

"Then who discovered the error?"

"I did. It struck me that the description was not correct."

"After you had signed it and French had witnessed it?"

"Y—yes." There was slight hesitation in Mr. Braden's voice.

"Don't you read things over before you sign and have your signature witnessed? Why didn't it strike you then?"

"You aren't cross-examining me!" Mr. Braden asserted.

"Not at all. I am just trying to understand a situation which is rather extraordinary. Then, as I understand it, you had a new conveyance prepared, and delivered it to French, and that's all you know about it?"

"That's all," Mr. Braden confirmed.

"Why didn't you destroy the other one?"

"I suppose I overlooked it. The papers got among others."

"And into your private safe."

"Yes. And they were stolen from it."

"But then you say they're worthless. You say that the two sets of papers were drawn on the same day? The second wasn't prepared subsequently and dated back?"

Mr. Braden hesitated, trying to read the purpose behind the question. He was again beginning to distrust Riley, who undoubtedly resembled an Airedale.

"I'm almost sure it was the same day. It may have been the next."

"But at all events within, say, forty-eight hours?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps your stenographer might remember? Or your clerk?"

"That clerk is dead," said Mr. Braden without noticeable regret. "My stenographer might or might not remember. But she could identify the papers as being written about the same time on the same machine."

"How?"

"Because I had only one machine in my office at that time, and that had certain peculiarities of type. I scrapped it soon after that, and got a new one. If you'll compare the deeds, you'll see they must have been written on the same machine."

"A very fair point," the judge admitted

blandly. "You have an excellent memory for details. But even if you establish that they were written on the same machine, it would not prove that they were written on the same day. For that you would have to depend on your own evidence and that of your stenographer."

"I don't have to prove when they were written," Mr. Braden stated. "The date of an instrument is prima facie evidence. I know a little law myself, Riley."

"A little law is a very dangerous thing to know," the judge commented.

"And I'm not going to be cross-examined by you," Mr. Braden declared. "If you contend that those deeds were made at different times it's up to you to prove it. Can you do that, hey?"

"Yes," the judge replied. "Absolutely!"

Mr. Braden almost jumped, and his heart again misbehaved.

"H-how?" he asked in a voice which shook slightly.

"In this way," the judge replied: "The conveyance delivered by French to his niece and dated some seven years ago is on paper bearing the watermark of a firm which did not exist, much less manufacture a single sheet of paper, until two years ago!"

It was a terrible blow, direct, unexpected, smashing through Mr. Braden's elaborate system of defense. It produced the shattering, shocking effect of high explosive. For a moment he was speechless. He rallied feebly.

"It's—it's a lie!" he stammered. "They were written on the same legal forms, printed by the same firm."

"On the same legal forms," the judge conceded. "But law stationers as a rule don't manufacture their own paper." His face became grim, his voice rose, and he drove his accusation home as in the old days of his greater prosperity he had broken other carefully prepared testimony.

"That one detail, Braden, overlooked by you and French, destroys entirely the plausible story you have invented. I am prepared to prove, and prove to the hilt, that the deeds delivered by French to my client are forgeries, prepared by you both to defraud a young woman of land which, instead of being worthless as you supposed it to be when you sold it to her father in fraudulent collusion with French, you suddenly discovered to have a high potential value. I say I am prepared to prove this, including the writing of the forged instruments on the same machine. I am prepared to prove, too, how the original deeds passed from French's possession to yours. You are in danger of standing in the dock facing a charge which carries a very heavy penalty. You must decide here and now, whether or not you will face that charge, and the damning evidence which I am prepared to bring against you."

Mr. Braden quailed before the stern voice and menacing finger of the old lawyer. He was not of the stuff to fight uphill, to play out a losing game to the last chip. What was the use? The judge had the goods on him. He sagged in his chair, all fight gone, his face white, his heart choking him.

"Don'—don't prosecute me, Riley!" he pleaded in a shaking voice. "I'll do anything you say. What do you want?"

CHAPTER XL.

SIGNS AND OMENS.

The reason of the temporary residence of Angus and his wife at her cottage lay principally in her whim. Angus laughed at it, but yielded, and found it rather pleasant to be alone with his wife. From force of habit he found a number of jobs which needed doing, things which should be put in order before the winter; but Faith insisted that it was to be a holiday. And so by day they rode leisurely along the base of the hills, rested at noon beside clear springs, ate with healthy appetites, and in the evenings returned to the cottage. Then there would be the cheery open fire against the chill of the fall night, and by its flickering light the banjo would talk, and whimper, and chuckle until Faith, laying it aside, would snuggle against her husband, watching the red heart of the fire, giving free rein to fancy.

"You are a dreamer, too," Faith accused him.

"I will be in about ten minutes."

"You might as well 'fess up. I wonder if you and I ever sat before a fire in a cave, together?"

"I don't remember it, myself."

"Oh, you may laugh, but it seems real to me—to-night. The wind in the trees is like the hiss and roar of squall-swept seas. I can hear other things, too—the soft padding of feet, and heavy, grunting, snuffling breaths. That is the tiger or the great cave

bear. But they can't get in, because you have rolled the stone against the mouth of our cave."

"Suppose I forgot it?"

"Then to pay for your carelessness, you would have to fight old Sabre Tooth. You would fight to the death for me, wouldn't you?"

"And for myself."

"Be gallant, please."

"Cave men weren't gallant. They walloped ladies with clubs and abducted them."

"Happy thought. You have abducted me. No, not that, either, because I was never anybody's but yours. But there is a very great warrior who is trying to take me from you."

"The old warrior sure has some nerve. What am I doing about that time?"

"You fight," she told him, her eyes on the heart of the fire, "while I stand by praying to the unknown God that you may kill him. And you do kill him. And then you set your foot on his body and shake your war club on high and shout a great, wild song to the stars. Oh, I can see you now! There is blood on your face, and the club is dripping with it, and I can hear the fierce song!"

"I'll bet the singing is fierce, too," Angus commented. But to his surprise she was trembling in his arms, every nerve aquiver. "What the dickens! Old girl, you're shaking! There now, that's plenty of that nonsense. It isn't good for sleeping."

For a moment she clung to him. "I'm awfully silly. But somehow it seemed real —to-night. I wonder if it ever did happen?"

"Of course not."

"Well, it's funny. I was just making it up. And then suddenly I felt that instead of making it up I was *recollecting*."

As she paused, Angus' ear caught a faint sound from without. To him it resembled the faint creak of a board beneath a stealthy footstep. For an instant his body tensed.

"What's the matter?" Faith asked. "Have you nerves, too?"

"Not that I know of. Turn in now and get a good rest, and don't dream of things."

But when she had gone to her room he yawned, stretched himself, wound the clock and passed into the hall leading to the kitchen. There hung his belt with holster and gun. He took the gun, went swiftly through the kitchen and outside. He circled the house, but neither saw nor heard anything, and so he went in again. But when he turned in, having extinguished the light, he laid the gun on the floor beside the bed, and in the morning smuggled it out without Faith's knowledge. Before she had risen he examined the ground around the house, but found no footprints other than their own. And so he came to the conclusion that whatever he had heard had not been a footstep.

He pottered around all morning, and in the afternoon decided to ride in to town and see Judge Riley. The latter might have some news.

"Well, I won't go," Faith decided. "I have bread to bake, and it's too far, anyway. I'll have supper ready when you get back."

But when Angus reached the judge's office it was closed. In the post office he found a note from him, consisting of four words: "Want to see you," and upon inquiry he learned that the lawyer had driven out with Doctor Wilkes to see a rancher named McLatchie who being taken suddenly ill had sent for legal as well as medical assistance. Angus decided to wait. As he strolled down the street he met Rennie emerging from Doctor Wilkes' office.

"Hallo," he said. "What's the matter with *you?*"

"Nothing with me," Rennie returned. "I was just doin' an errand. But they tell me the doc's out."

"What is it?" Angus asked, for Rennie's face was troubled.

"You ain't heard? Well, Mary, that granddaughter of old Paul Sam, has been missin' some days, and to-day they find her —drowned."

"Good Lord!" Angus exclaimed. "How did it happen?" Rennie's face darkened.

"I dunno. They say she drowned herself. They say some white man is mixed up in it. She was a notch or two above the ordinary klootch, and sooh, well, it's just the same old rotten mess!"

"Poor girl!" Angus said after a moment of silence. "This will be hard on old Paul Sam. Do the Indians know this white man?"

"I dunno. I heard—mind you I dunno what there is in it—that Blake French is the man. He's dirty enough. But I dunno's the Injuns know it. I seen old Paul Sam. He wasn't talkin'. Just sittin' starin' straight ahead. And the klootch lyin' on

her bed alongside him where they'd put her down. Ugh! Some of 'em wanted me to send the doc out. He makes reports of deaths and such to the government, and then he's coroner. So I come."

The event touched Angus deeply. He had known the dead girl all his life. She was, as Rennie had said, a notch or two above the ordinary klootch. Paul Sam, too, was a good Indian, a friend of his and of his father's, so far as the white man who knows the Indian admits him to friendship. It would be a heavy blow for the old man. But unless some of the young bucks took the law into their own hands it was unlikely that the man responsible for the tragedy—Blake French or another—would suffer at all.

It was long after dark when the judge drove in, and Angus waiting at the livery stable, greeted him.

"How's McLatchie?" he asked.

The judge, with emphasis, consigned McLatchie to torment.

"A bellyache!" he exclaimed, "and he thought he was going to die. I wanted Wilkes to cut him open, just as a lesson. And will you believe me, the damned Scotch —I beg your pardon, Angus, I mean the damned lowlander—when the fear of God produced by the fear of death left his rotten heart with the pain from his equally rotten stomach, refused to make his will. I made him do it, though—and pay for it. Well, you got my note. Come up to the office, where we can talk."

But when he had lit a couple of lamps which illuminated his office and turned to his desk he stopped short.

"Somebody's been in here," he said. "Things are not as I left them." He drew out the drawers of his desk. "Aha!" he exclaimed, for the papers they held had evidently been taken out and jammed back in disorder. "Now what misguided idiot thought a law office worth robbing? I wonder, now—— By the Lord! but I believe that's it!"

"What?" Angus queried.

"Why somebody's been after *your* documents," the judge replied. "Oho, Braden, me buck! You must think I'm a fool!"

"You mean you think Braden was trying to get back the original deeds?"

"And something else. It's a poor tribute he pays to my intelligence, thinking I'd leave such papers lying at the mercy of a flimsy door lock. People think I am careless, old-fashioned, because they can't see a safe in my office. Well, anybody can blow a safe —if the safe can be found. I had one blown once, and it was nearly the ruin of me. But look here!" A section of wainscoting swung out under his hand, revealing the face of a steel safe. "No local man had anything to do with installing this," the judge said; "and back of it is a false wall to my inner room." He spun the combination and threw the door open. Taking out a thick envelope he drew from it a single sheet of paper which he handed to Angus.

Angus read in amazement. It was a brief statement signed by Braden acknowledging forgery by French and himself, and an acknowledgment of the authenticity of the original deeds.

"How on earth did you get this?" he asked.

The judge told him.

"Well, that was mighty clever of you," Angus said in admiration. "I'd never have thought of that."

"Braden didn't either," the judge said dryly. "And what's more he never thought that my statement about the watermark might be worth verifying."

"Do you mean you bluffed him?" Angus exclaimed.

"It was the only way," the judge nodded. "His story, stuck to through thick and thin, would have prevailed because we had no evidence to contradict it. But being guilty, it never occurred to him to demand an inspection of the papers. It may have occurred to him now. He may have searched my office in my absence, hoping to get back his confession as well as the deeds. But most of us realize our mistakes too late."

"Judge," Angus said solemnly, "you are a wonder."

"When I was your age I would have agreed with that," the judge grinned. "But I am merely an old dog with some experience of foxes. This settles Braden's hash. He will leave town—and possibly leave some creditors."

"I thought he had plenty of money."

"He has lost a good deal lately in speculation—lost it or tied it up. I imagine he will get together what cash he can and leave. His debts are none of my business. I will now have these deeds registered, and you will have no more trouble about title."

"When you send me your bill, put in the watermark."

"My bill will have a sufficiently high watermark to suit you," the judge chuckled. "And now, young man, I'm too old to be modest. Naturally you will incorporate, sooner or later, to work this property to advantage. I want to incorporate you, and I want such of the company's legal work as I am competent to handle."

"That's all of it."

"I meant that," the judge admitted. "And if I were permitted to buy a block of stock on as good terms as anybody I would take it."

"That goes, of course," Angus agreed, "and it doesn't by any means cancel our obligation to you. And now I must be drifting. My wife is alone, and I was to have been back by supper."

"You'll have a dark ride."

"My horse has good feet. Good night, judge, and thank you again."

The wind struck Angus hard as he left the office. It was blowing great guns, and as the judge had said, it was very dark. When he left the lights behind it was better as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness. But ragged clouds hung low, and the mountains usually visible against even the sky of night could not be seen. The wind was roaring through the tops of the firs with a sound as of running waves. But the road was good, and when Chief of his own notion struck into a long, trail-devouring lope, he did not check him.

"I've got the nerves of a squirrel tonight," he muttered. "I'll be seeing things next. Go on, Chief, old boy! Leak out of here!"

With the touch of his heel the big chestnut settled to the business of covering ground. The wind increased, and with it came rain, huge drops driving like buckshot, stinging as they hit. Somewhere off the road a tree snapped and crashed down.

"Timber!" Angus shouted to the darkness, for the storm and the pace were getting into his blood, and with their entry his nervousness was replaced by a feeling of exhilaration. Then the chestnut rose in a clean, sailing jump, and Angus realized that he had cleared a fallen tree. But he did not slacken speed.

They were off the main road now, on the less-used trail, and the ranch was little over a mile distant. Angus could picture Faith waiting, wondering what had detained him, perhaps a little anxious because of the storm. She would laugh when he told her that he had suffered from nerves. She——

Chief snorted, leaped, and something caught Angus across the chest. For a moment it yielded, tautened and snapped back, tearing his thigh grip loose. At the pace he was riding it plucked him from the saddle as a hawk lifts a chick from the brood, flinging him backward to the earth. He struck it heavily on his shoulders and the back of his head. He had a dim impression of somebody or something leaping on him, of a blow, and then darkness shut down absolutely.

CHAPTER XLI.

TERROR.

Toward five o'clock, her bread being baked, Faith put in the oven a pan containing two young mallards and a blue grouse, all overlaid with strips of bacon. She made her vegetables ready and set the table. Now and then she glanced from the window expectantly, but saw nothing of Angus. When dusk came she lighted the lamps.

Finally she ate her own supper alone, slightly annoyed. Angus had promised to be back in time. Something must have detained him. She put his meal in the warming oven, sat down and tried to read. But somehow the book failed to interest. She had recourse to the banjo, but that little sister of the lonesome failed of charm. The wind rose until it was blowing a gale. Once she went to the door and looked out. The darkness seemed intense.

Ten o'clock came. What on earth was keeping Angus? She began to worry, which she told herself was absurd. Resolutely she sat down and picked up a book. She would not allow herself to be stampeded by nerves. She made up her mind to sit on that couch before the fire until her husband returned.

She found it hard to keep this resolution. She craved movement. She wanted a drink, an apple, a different book—anything, to get up and move around. But she resisted these assaults on her will.

Her thoughts reverted to the foolery of the preceding night. She had pretended to be a cave woman with her man. Now she was alone. What happened to those ancient women whose men went out never to return? How long did they feed the fire o'

nights, and listen alone to the noises of the dark? The fancy proved more attractive than the book. She leaned back comfortably, enjoying the play of her imagination, constructing the life story of an unknown sister in the dawn of the world and presently, in proof that there was nothing seriously wrong with her nerves, she fell asleep before the fire.

She woke with a start. There were footsteps in the house. Angus, then, had come back. She smiled, contented. She would scold him—in fun. But as she listened the footsteps seemed to differ from his firm, light tread. The handle of the door turned and a man who was not Angus stood framed in the opening—a man who wore a handkerchief across his face, whose eyes, invisible beneath the shadow of a broad hat brim, peered at her through holes cut in the fabric.

"Don't be scared," he said in deep tones which she judged were unnatural. "You won't be hurt."

"I'm not afraid," she replied, and was surprised to find her voice quite steady. "What do you want?"

"I want those deeds."

He could mean only the deeds Turkey had given her. Then he must be an emissary of Braden. Obviously it was not Braden himself. But how could he know who had the deeds?

"Now, listen," the masked man added as she did not reply: "I know you have them. I know they are here in this house. You'll save trouble by handing them over."

"I'll do nothing of the sort," Faith told him; "and you had better go before my husband comes home."

The masked man laughed. "Your husband won't be home for a while. If you won't give them to me I'll find them myself."

"Very well," Faith replied. "But don't break anything, please."

"You've got nerve, all right," the man conceded. As he spoke another man similarly masked entered, standing by the door. The first turned to him and they held a whispered conversation. "Well, we'll look for 'em," the first man announced. "If you're sensible you'll just sit quiet."

She began to study the intruders, to find if she could note something by which to identify them. There was nothing recognizable about the first. The second was a big man. His face was quite invisible. A riding slicker concealed most of his figure. She had not heard his voice. And yet she found something elusively familiar in his presence.

From her bedroom she heard the sounds of drawers pulled out and closed and the slam of a trunk lid. She would have been amused at the hopelessness of their search but for her growing anxiety for her husband. Even if he did come, they were armed and he was not. The search progressed from one room to another, and as it did so it became more impatient. At last they gave it up, and the first man advanced to her.

"You have those papers pretty well cached," he admitted. "Where are they?"

"I thought you were going to find them," she retorted.

"You can cut that out. Now you're going to tell us where they are."

"Am I?"

"That's what I said. Now see here, I'm going to give it to you straight: Your husband isn't going to come home till we turn him loose. He told us you had those deeds. When you give 'em up you'll see him, and not before."

"My husband never told you anything of the sort," Faith said. "You're merely bluffing."

"Bluffing or not, we're going to get what we came for. You're alone. There isn't a living soul in miles. We don't want to hurt you or your husband, but if you've got any sense you'll give up, and save trouble for everybody."

"What you want isn't here," Faith told him.

"We know they are here. Riley hasn't got them, because we've gone through his office. And your husband hasn't got them, because we've gone through *him*. So you have them. You can't bluff us. No more nonsense, now!" He caught her wrist with one hand, while with the other he thrust the muzzle of his gun in her face. "Hand them over," he snarled ferociously, "or say your prayers!"

But in spite of the fact that the ring of steel almost touched her forehead Faith was not convinced. It was melodrama, tawdry, poor. The man was a poor actor. She laughed in his face.

"Take care!" she said, "you are hurting my wrist."

For a moment the muzzle touched her forehead and the grip tightened. Then he flung her wrist aside.

"What the hell can you do with a woman, anyway?" he demanded in disgust.

But his companion sprang forward. "You let her bluff you," he growled hoarsely, "but she won't bluff me!" He caught Faith by the throat. "Where are they?" he demanded. "Talk quick, or I'll choke you!" His fingers compressed her throat till she gasped. The strong taint of alcohol met her nostrils.

"No, damn it!" the first man cried, in protest; but his companion cursed him, swinging Faith between them.

"You keep out of this!" he cried savagely. "I'll make her talk inside a minute!" And his grip shut down.

This time there was no bluff. Faith realized the primitive savagery of the hands that were laid on her. With the knowledge she fought wildly, like a cornered animal. For a moment the other man was forgotten. Anger and fear lent her strength. She caught at the handkerchief which hid her assailant's face, and as he loosed one hand to catch her wrist she broke away, tearing the cloth with her. She reeled back, gasping, disheveled, her dress torn at the throat, her hair bursting from confining pins falling on her shoulders.

"Blake!" she cried hoarsely. "Blake French!"

Stripped of his disguise, Blake French faced her, lowering, ferocious—but suddenly afraid.

"I wasn't going to hurt you," he said.

Her hands went to her throat.

"To hurt me? You liar! You utter brute! Is that what you will tell my husband?"

Blake's face contorted. He took a step forward.

"You'll tell him, will you?"

"Of course I will!" Faith cried.

Blake French knew that her recognition was disastrous. The whole plan, including the blackmailing of Braden, had depended upon recovering the deeds without recognition. But now the matter of the deeds faded into nothingness. His innate brutality had swept him away, carried him too far. Apart from the law he knew the penalty that Angus Mackay would exact from the man who laid hands on his wife. But Angus was lying roped, helpless, a mile away. He was afraid, desperate. There must be silence; at all costs, silence.

He advanced. Faith sprang back, putting the table between them. But Garland suddenly interposed. Like Blake, he saw the collapse of their plans, but he accepted the failure.

"No more of that!" he said. "Let her alone!"

Blake turned on him in fury.

"You damned fool!" he snarled. "We've got to fix her, and Mackay, too, now!"

"You're crazy!" Garland cried. "Do you want to hang?"

"And do you want Mackay to kill you?" Blake retorted. He sprang forward, caught the table and thrust it aside. But Garland caught his arm.

"Let her alone, I tell you!" he repeated. "Come on; it's all off. Let's get out of here!"

Blake with a swift jerk ripped the concealing handkerchief from Garland's face. "Let her take a look at you, too!" he cried, and flinging him aside drew his gun and turned on Faith.

Faith, facing him helpless, found herself looking into the eyes of Murder. It was useless to run. She stood and waited, white to the lips, but looking him in the face. The gun rose. Garland, recovering, sprang at Blake. But at that instant the door went wide with the crash of a shattered catch, and into the room bounded Angus Mackay.

He was hatless, wet, plastered with mud. His eyes blazed in his swarthy face. At a glance they took in the disorder, the overturned table; Faith standing at bay, Blake French with drawn gun, Garland suddenly arrested in his spring. Then in grim, deadly silence he launched himself at Blake.

Faith saw the gun shift and swing. Its report in the confines of the room was shattering. Garland struck Blake's arm as the weapon blazed a second time; but Angus staggered and pitched forward at Blake's feet.

Forgetful of all else Faith sprang forward and knelt beside him, lifting his head. Blood oozed horribly from his dark hair. She turned her face, white, anguished, to his assailant. Above her, Garland in fear cursed Blake.

"Now you've done it!" he said between oaths. "You've killed him."

"She—she'll tell!" Blake chattered with quivering lips. "We've got to——" He raised his gun with twitching hand. Garland caught it. He thrust his own weapon in Blake's face.

"If you try that I'll blow your head off!" he declared. With a quick wrench he twisted the weapon from Blake, and menacing him with his gun shoved him toward the door. "We've got to make a get-away. Get the horses, quick!" At the door he hesitated. Returning, he knelt beside Faith.

"Let me see a minute," he said. Her senses were too dulled to shrink from him. Suddenly he drew a quick breath, almost a gasp of relief. "He isn't dead."

"Not dead?" Faith cried.

"Not by a long ways. Just creased along the scalp. I guess I hit the gun just in time, and I'm mighty near as glad as you are. He'll be all right. I just want to say, before I pull out, that I never meant to do more than scare you. Maybe you think I'm lying, and I don't blame you. But I'm not."

"I believe you," Faith said. In her sudden relief lesser things did not matter. "I don't know what to do. Stay and help me, please."

"I guess you don't understand," he returned, shaking his head. "This would mean about twenty years apiece for me and Blake if we're caught. And then"—he nodded at Angus—"when he comes around there won't be room enough in this country for him and us."

"But I'll tell him you helped me—how you struck Blake's arm—and afterward!"

"You're one white girl," Garland said with emphasis, "but I'm in too deep. You can tell him if you like, and you can tell him I'm pulling out. I never meant to do more than bluff you. Good-by."

He was gone. Faith got water, towels, and bathed Angus' head. Touching the wound with tender fingers she found that as Garland had said it was apparently in the scalp merely. Presently Angus sighed, stirred, muttered and opened his eyes.

"Hallo!" he said, and as recollection came to him he sat up suddenly, staring around "Where are they?" he demanded.

"They are gone, dear. It's all right. Don't try to get up."

But he shook his head impatiently and rose to his feet, staring at her.

"What happened? Blake French and Garland! What were they doing? What's the matter with your hair? Your dress is torn." A tremendous expletive burst from him. "What are those marks on your throat?"

Her hand fluttered upward involuntarily. "Nothing. Never mind now. Please——"

"They laid hands on you!" he cried. "On *you!* And I wasn't here! Tell me. No, no, I'm all right. Tell me!"

She told him, seeing his face set and grow rigid. He groaned.

"They stretched a rope between two trees, and I rode into it. The fall almost knocked me out, and they finished the job. They roped me up. It took me a long time to get loose." He held out his wrists, stripped of skin to the raw flesh. "I was afraid of some devil's work, but——" He broke off, shaking his head, and put his hand to his left side. When he removed it his fingers' tips were stained.

"Oh, you are hurt—twice!" Faith cried.

"I don't think this is much." He stripped himself to the waist. The lamplight revealed a red furrow lying along his ribs, but though it bled freely the skin was little more than broken. To Faith's pleading to lie down he shook his head. On his instructions she brought an old sheet which he ripped into a long bandage. "That was Blake's first shot," he said as he replaced his garments. "He'll have to do better shooting than that—next time."

"Next time?" she exclaimed.

He did not reply, but going into the hall came back with a rifle in one hand and his gun belt in the other.

"Old girl, please rustle me some grub—cold meat and bread—and put it in an old sugar sack."

"But Angus, what are you going to do?"

"To do? I am going after Blake French and Garland, of course."

"But you are hurt. You are not fit——"

"I am not hurt at all—to speak of. I have a long account to settle with Blake French and Garland—yes, and with the whole bunch of those Frenches and Braden as well—and now I am going to clean it up."

"But if I forgive——"

"Forgive!" he interrupted bitterly. "It does not matter to me what you forgive. You are a woman. But I am a man and you are my wife, and I can see the marks of Blake French's fingers on your flesh. As surely as God lives I will kill him, or he will kill me. About Garland I don't know—yet."

His will was set, hardened; his mood black, deadly. Immediately he set about his simple preparations. He knew that

Blake and Garland would not wait his coming. In all probability they would break for the hills, where he must be prepared to follow them. He had found Chief, who had come home of his own accord, waiting by the gate. A pack pony would hamper his movements. He shoved his food in a sack, rolled a single blanket in a trap, got out a heavy sweater and changed his boots for shoe packs. Then he held out his arms to Faith. She clung to him.

"Don't go!" she pleaded. "If anything should happen—now——"

"I must go," he said. "If I didn't I should be less than a man. Nothing will happen—to me. To-morrow—or it's to-day now, I guess—go to the ranch and stay there till I get back."

He kissed her gently and put her from him. She followed him to the door and saw him mount. He waved his hand and vanished in the blackness of the night.

Faith returned to the living room and sank into a chair. She was shaken, bone-tired, sick at heart. A lifetime seemed to have passed since she and Angus had sat there the night before, indulging in make-believe, playing at tragedy. Now tragedy had invaded their lives. It was like an evil dream.

How long she sat there she never knew. Nor did she know how she became aware that she was not alone. She turned her head to see a figure standing behind her. Her shaken nerves forced a cry from her lips.

It was the old Indian, Paul Sam. There was a rifle under his arm, and around his middle was a belt from which in a beaded scabbard hung a long, broad-bladed knife. He was hatless, and his long, gray hair hung in two braids in front of his shoulders.

"All right," he said. "You not be scared. Where him Angus?"

"He isn't here."

The old Indian's eyes roved around the room, resting on the signs of disorder. "Iktah mamook?" he queried.

"I don't understand."

"What you mamook? What you do?" He threw up his head, his nostrils twitching like a dog's. "Smell um smoke," he said. "Somebody shoot. You see um Blake French?"

"He was here, but he has gone," Faith told him.

The old Indian's dark eyes peered at her, noting her agitation. "Me ol' man," he said. "Angus, him my tillikum. You him klootchman, him wife, all same my tillikum. Goo'by."

Faith, left alone, knew she could not sleep. She dreaded the darkness, the lying waiting for slumber which would not come. She decided to stay before the fire till daylight. Then she would go to the Mackay ranch.

The wind had ceased, and in the comparative stillness she heard a low, distant drumming which she recognized as the sound of horses' hoofs. They approached, halted, and she started up in apprehension. What would happen next? Was everybody abroad that night? Footsteps tramped on the veranda; somebody knocked.

"Who is there?" she demanded.

"Me—Turkey."

She opened the door. There stood Turkey. Shadowy in the background was Rennie with the horses. She saw that Turkey was armed.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "You look sick. Where's Angus?"

She told him, finding relief in the confidence. Turkey might bring Angus back, or see that no harm befell him. As he listened a hard light came into Turkey's eyes.

"If Angus don't get Blake and Nick Garland, I will," he declared. "But I didn't know they were here. I thought they were with the bunch that did up Braden."

"Did up Braden?"

Turkey nodded. "The French boys—I thought sure Blake was in it, but I guess he couldn't have been—blew open Braden's safe and got away with the whole works. Braden was shot. Dave and I are part of a posse raised to round them up, and I wanted Angus. Braden, before he died, said that Gavin French is the man that shot father."

CHAPTER XLII.

OUTLAWS!

Mr. Braden, some twenty-four hours after his interview with Judge Riley, made the shocking discovery that in all probability he had laid down a pat hand before a bluff. But though the discovery brought him to the verge of an apoplectic fit, it came too late. He had signed a statement covering the facts. Under the circumstances it did not matter who had the deeds. If Garland, then his scheme of blackmail would fall

down. Mr. Braden found much to occupy him in the crisis which the loss of the coal property made in his affairs.

The fact was that he was very hard up. Under the circumstances he was forced to the conclusion that he had played out his string. He had been wise to secure cash. He could raise a few thousand more, and as soon as he did so he would pull out. At once he began to convert his few remaining assets, and as he turned them into cash he put it in his office safe, in a private compartment. The total formed a nice nest egg for the future. His creditors in the course of time might get judgment and be hanged to them, but the cash would be where it could not be tied up by injunctions.

Nevertheless, the strain told on his nerves. For some time he had slept badly, and now he slept scarcely at all. Whisky, which formerly had had a soporific effect, now failed, though he doubled the quantity.

And so, as Angus rode home through the darkness, Mr. Braden lay awake. His mind, after the habit of the insomniac, searched for, dug up and turned over the most unpleasant things within his recollection, driving sleep farther and farther away. It dwelt upon mistakes, failures, humiliations of years before. The wind roared and rain slashed upon the windows; and Mr. Braden, cursed by a thousand plaguing little devils of memory, cursed the night and the darkness and longed for day.

At last he dozed, but was awakened by a muffled, jarring reverberation which shook his bed slightly. It was much like localized thunder. He lay listening, and his ear caught a sound below.

Somebody was in his office. In an instant he was out of bed. He reflected that the boss of a local logging camp who had a pay roll to meet the next day, had deposited a considerable amount of cash in his safe. No doubt that was what the robbers were after. But they would not overlook his own cash, too. He could not obtain help until too late. He must stop them single-handed, if at all.

His knees shaking slightly, Mr. Braden padded softly across the room to a wardrobe from which he took an old hammer ten-gauge shotgun, found a box of antique shells, and filled the chambers. Then he stole cautiously downstairs.

The door of his office was closed. He turned the knob and gently opened the door a crack. In the darkness the rays of a flash light flickered on his open safe. Figures were vaguely outlined. He could not tell how many there were. Obviously, the thing to do was to cover them with the shotgun, but light was necessary, for otherwise they might attack him in the dark. His office was wired, and just beside the door was a switch. He put the gun to his shoulder, holding it with one hand while he felt for the switch. He found it, turned it, and the office sprang into light.

Three men were beside the safe. One held a flash light, another the mouth of a gunny sack to which the third was transferring the safe's contents.

"Hands up!" Mr. Braden commanded in a voice which shook badly.

The three men sprang erect. Mr. Braden recognized Gavin, Gerald and Larry French. They had made no attempt to conceal their faces. They blinked, frowning in the sudden light.

"You infernal scoundrels!" cried Mr. Braden. "Put up your hands! Put them up I tell you. If you make a move I'll shoot."

Mr. Braden's mistake was in reiteration. Etiquette and common sense alike demand that instant obedience to a gun be enforced by the gun itself. In this case the muzzle of the gun wavered and wabbled badly.

"Put that gas pipe down!" Gavin said contemptuously.

Quite by accident, in response to unintentional pressure of an unsteady finger, the ten-gauge roared and the shot charge, almost solid at that short range, passing between Gavin and Gerald, struck and spattered against the steel wall of the safe. Instantly, smoothly, Gerald jerked a six-shooter from its holster and fired twice.

Mr. Braden's face assumed an expression of dumb wonder. The shotgun sagged, exploded again, and the charge ripped the floor. He sank downward, pitched forward, and lay still.

"Hell fire!" cried Gavin. "What did you do that for?"

"What for?" Gerald returned. "Because I don't want to be shot, myself."

"He didn't mean to shoot. He wouldn't have shot again."

"Then he was damned careless," Gavin replied. "One barrel of a shotgun is plenty for me. It was coming to him."

But in a rolling explosion of oaths Gavin cursed his brother for a fool. He had spilled

the beans. There would be a devil of a row. They would have to make a get-away.

"What for—if he can't talk?" Gerald asked.

But at that moment Larry uttered an exclamation. He pointed to a window. Against the pane below the drawn blind was a face white in the reflected light. Almost instantly it vanished. Outside they heard running feet.

"How about a get-away now?" Gavin demanded. "He's gone to get help. I know him. He's a clerk in Parks' law office."

"I guess that settles it," Gerald concurred coolly. Swiftly he scooped the remaining currency into the sack. "Well," he added, "we've got something to make a get-away on."

"Come on, come on," young Larry urged.

"Keep cool," said Gerald.

"If you'd kept cool,"the younger man retorted, "we could have bluffed Braden."

But none of them voiced a regret for Braden himself. His death, if he was dead, was to be deplored merely as it might affect them. Gavin turned the huddled figure over and swore afresh.

"You're too smooth with a gun, Jerry. He isn't dead yet, but I guess he's got his. Now we have to beat it."

They emerged on the street and ran for their horses, tethered on the outskirts of town, mounted and pounded off on the trail toward the ranch. They rode fast, but without forcing their horses, for later they would need all that was in the animals.

The ranch was dark as they rode up to it. They loosened cinches, removed bridles and gave the horses feed. Entering the house they began to throw an outfit together.

Gavin, mounting the stairs, knocked at his sister's door.

"I want to talk to you, Kit."

"In the morning."

"No, now."

"Come in, then."

She sat up in bed as he struck a match and lit the lamp. As he turned to her the big man's cold, blue eyes softened a shade in expression. He sat on the side of the bed and put his arm around her.

"Kittens, old girl, I've only got minutes. Jerry, Larry and I have got to pull out." He told her why, bluntly, feeling her body tense and stiffen. "So that was how it was," he concluded. "And now here's what we're going to do: We're going to break north through the hills and work up into the Cache River Valley. Then we'll go east or west, whichever looks best. We may split up, or not. Here's some money—no, no, this is all right. Braden never saw this. It's mine. Don't give any of it to Blake. And here's what you do: This place is sunk with a mortgage, so sell your own horses and quit it. Let the tail go with the hide. Get out of here, and wherever you go subscribe for the *Pacific Spokesman*. Read the 'lost' column every day, and when you see an ad. for a lost horse with our brand, answer it. I'll be doing that advertising. I guess that's all. I'm sorry, Kit, but it's the best I can do for you now."

"Yes, it's the best," she admitted. "Don't worry about me. I was going to leave here anyway. I'm going to do something, I don't know just what. But ever since father died I've known I couldn't go on as we've been going. You've made an awful mess of things —you boys. I've seen you going downhill —from bad to worse—losing your self-respect and that of others, falling lower and lower, till it has come to—this.

"And I've gone downhill myself. I've lived on money, knowing how it was obtained, and saying nothing. I'm not preaching. I'm not finding fault. But I'm through. And I'm through with you boys unless you change. Of the whole lot, you're the only one I care anything about. I don't know if you care anything about me, but if you do you're the only one who does. You've always been fair and decent to me, anyway, Gan. I—I'd have loved you—if you'd let me."

"Damn it, Kit," her brother replied, "why didn't you say something like that before. I've been fond of you ever since you were a baby, but you never let me see you thought anything more of me than the other boys—and that was mighty little. Well—what you say is true. I'm a rotten bad lot, but all the same I'm just about as sick of the show as you are. And I'll tell you this much: If I can get clear now I'll make a fresh start —I've been thinking of the Argentine—and if you'll go with me, I'd like it."

"I'll go," she promised. "But suppose you don't get clear?"

The big man shrugged his shoulders. "Then I lose out. I'm not going to rot in the pen. You can say a little prayer if you feel like it."

She stared at him, somber-eyed. "I suppose that's the best way, after all."

"The only way. And now I must rustle an outfit."

"I'll be down in a minute," she said.

She came down to the apparent confusion of their preparations. Each had drawn on his personal outfit. Gerald and Larry nodded to her. She said little, made no reproaches, helping them silently, swiftly. Suddenly Larry paused, throwing up his head, lifting his hand. Upon the sudden silence burst the sound of swift hoofs. The brothers looked at each other.

"Go upstairs, Kit," said Gavin, "and stay there."

But in a moment it was evident that there was but one horse. The door was tried, shaken. A furious oath came from outside.

"It's just Blake," said Larry, and unfastened the door.

Blake stared at his brothers, at their weapons, at the outfit piled in the room.

"What's this?" he asked.

"You may as well know," said Gerald and told him. "And you keep your mouth shut," he concluded.

Blake laughed with a certain relief. "I've got to make a get-away myself. I'm going with you. I shot up Angus Mackay."

"You shot Angus!" Kathleen cried. Her face went white, and she clutched the back of a chair. "Do you mean that he is dead?"

"No," Blake replied. He had learned that much from Garland, who had decided that it would be safer for him to part company and had done so. "He'll get over it, I guess."

"What started it?" Larry asked.

"He came for me and I downed him," Blake replied sullenly. "Never mind what started it."

"You're lying!" Kathleen told him fiercely. "I know you, Blake. You'd never have faced him if he had had a gun. You shot him in the back, or unarmed."

But Gavin interposed.

"If you're coming with us, get a move on. Rustle your own outfit."

They gave Blake scant time. Immediately Larry began to pack two ponies. If necessary these could be abandoned, but meanwhile they would save the saddle horses. In a few minutes they were packed. All but Gavin mounted. In the hall he took Kathleen in his great arms and kissed her.

"Good-by, Kit. No telling how this will come out. Remember what I told you."

"I'll remember," she said. "Good-by, Gan—and good luck!"

He released her and swung into the saddle. In a moment they had vanished in the darkness, heading north for the pass which led into the wilderness of the hills —outlaws.

CHAPTER XLIII.

TAKING THE TRAIL.

Kathleen returned to her room and dressed herself fully. It was only a matter of time until pursuit would be organized, would arrive, and she would be questioned. She would tell nothing. Her brothers should have their fighting chance.

Already her mind, recovering from the shock of the unexpected, was busy with the future. A sister of outlaws! Well, she would go away, adopt some other name, and wait till she heard from Gavin.

With a swift pang of pain she thought of Angus Mackay. How badly was he hurt? With daylight she would see, she would offer to do what she could. Of course Faith and Jean would shrink from Blake's sister. She could not help that. She would take her medicine. There would be much bitter medicine to take.

She went downstairs and began to put away things that her brothers had at first selected and then discarded. It would not be long, now, till something happened. She picked up a coat of Larry's, turned with it in her hand, and saw Angus Mackay.

She had heard no sound. Yet he stood in the doorway. His head was bandaged. A six-shooter in his hand advertised his purpose.

"Angus!" she cried. He raised his hand in a warning gesture.

"Don't make a noise! I didn't expect to see you. I'm sorry. I'll go away."

"You are looking for Blake!"

He nodded silently.

"He isn't here, Angus. He has gone. I want to know what happened."

"It will not be pleasant for you to hear."

"I must know."

As he told her, her face grew white with anger.

"I knew he was a brute—a cur!" she said. "But this is too much."

"Yes, it is too much," he agreed gravely. "I am sorry, because he is your brother, but

it has come to a finish between Blake and me."

"I understand," she said with equal gravity. "I do not feel that he is my brother. But they have all gone together, and I may as well tell you why."

He listened, frowning. He did not care about Braden, to whom he attributed the attempt of Blake and Garland to recover Faith's deeds. But if Blake had gone with the other boys it meant that they would all stand together. It was feud, then, at last, unavoidable.

"They don't know," Kathleen said, "that Blake laid hands on Faith. If they had known, they would not help him. They are bad enough, but at least they are men."

He nodded silently. There was no doubt of that. Kathleen raised her head, listening. He became aware of a distant sound.

"That is—the law," she said. "Perhaps you would rather not be seen here—with me."

"I am glad to be here. I will see them. You shouldn't be alone. If you will go to Faith in the morning, and say that I asked you to stay with her——"

"No, no!" she cried. "It is kind of you. You are a good man, Angus. But I can't do that."

"You would be welcome."

"Still I cannot do it."

But the hoofbeats swelled in volume and clattered to a halt in front of the house. Angus went to the front door and opened it. He found himself confronted by a long, lean, grizzled gentleman who held a gun of orthodox proportions in readiness for action. But as he recognized Angus he lowered it with a grunt of surprise.

"Didn't expect to see *you!* Any of the French boys in the house?"

"They've pulled out. Their sister is alone."

The grizzled gentleman grunted again. His name was Bush, and he was the sheriff's deputy. As the sheriff was old and carried much weight for age, the rough jobs fell to Jake Bush, who did them well. He possessed much experience, a craw full of sand, and a thorough understanding of a gun. Behind him, with horses, Angus saw men he knew—Bustede, Drury, Fanning, McClintock—all men of the hills.

"Yeh, I figgered them boys would pull out ahead of me," Bush admitted placidly. "And of course they'll p'int out north for the hills, where they ain't no wires. They know the country darn well, too. So I called in at your ranch and rousted out Dave. He's a wise old ram in them hills. Your brother wanted to come, and he bein' a useful kid I swore him in, too. I wanted you, but when I found out where you was I sent Dave and the kid after you, and come right along here. But I had a hunch it'd be too late. Still, it's a s'prise to see you."

"And you want to know why I'm here?"

"Well—yes. It might have some bearin' on the case."

Angus told him why, and Bush's eyebrows drew together.

"Now I'm free to say that for a low-down skunk this here Blake French is some punkins. I sure thought he was with his brothers, but this gives him a alibi, I s'pose. And I s'pose, also, you're out to git him. Is that right?"

"That's right."

"I don't say he don't need killin'," said the deputy. "But the darn law—nowadays—sorter discourages these here private executions. And I'm an officer of the law."

"You and the law, Jake," Angus said deliberately, "can both go to hell!"

"Now don't be so darn hair-trigger!" the deputy protested. "Here's the proposition: You've give me information which justifies me in arrestin' him for murderous assault on your wife, and shootin' you with intent to kill. His brothers is wanted for robbery and murder, and they're all stringin' their chips together. I figger they'll all resist arrest, and I don't believe in allowin' my officers to be shot up. So if you was sworn in, and was to kill Blake resistin' arrest, it would be all reg'lar. Savvy?"

"But suppose he doesn't resist arrest?"

"Never cross a bridge till you come to it," said Bush wisely. "You got to come along with us to find him, anyhow. So I'll swear you in and we'll hope for the best."

Bush's questioning of Kathleen was perfunctory. He grinned at her refusal to give information. "I wouldn't think much of you if you did," he admitted, and went on a tour of investigation, from which he drew some very accurate deductions.

Turkey and Rennie arrived, and for the first time Angus heard of Braden's dying declaration that Gavin French was responsible for the killing of Adam Mackay. But beyond the bare statement there were no

details. Braden's end had come before he had been able to amplify it.

"Do you suppose it's so?" Turkey queried. "Or was he just trying to hang something on Gavin?"

Angus did not know. There were times, in the years, when he had been puzzled by Gavin's peculiar regard of himself. There had always been something in the big man's eyes which he could not read, something veiled, inscrutable. He alone of the brothers had been reluctant to take up their father's quarrel with Angus. This might be the reason.

"If he killed father," said Turkey grimly, "he's got it coming to him. You take Blake, and I'll take him."

"There is nothing to go on but what Braden said," Angus pointed out. But he thought of his father's dying words. His father had not wished to lay a feud upon him. It fitted.

At dawn, acting on Bush's theory, they headed north for the pass. When they struck it there were fresh hoofprints, many of them, heading into the hills.

"That's them," said Bush. "Hey, Dave?"

"Sure," said Rennie. "It ain't Injuns. These horses is shod."

A mountain pass is not a road. It merely represents the only practicable way of winning through the jumbled world of hills. Railway construction in the mountains follows the pass, but persons who admire scenery from vestibuled coaches know nothing of the old pass of the pack trail, the binding brush, the fallen timber, the slides, the swift creeks, the gulches, the precipices to which the trail must cling.

In the afternoon they reached the summit of the first divide. It was comparatively low, and timbered. There was a lake, scarcely more than a pond. There the fugitives had halted.

"I sh'd say they got two pack ponies," Bush decided. "There's the four French boys, and maybe Garland."

"Garland ain't with 'em," Rennie returned with conviction. "He's too darn wise. He knows Angus would go after Blake, or if he didn't me or Turkey would. So he'd quit Blake right away and pull out by himself. I'd bet money on it."

"Not with me," Bush grinned. "I guess you're right."

They were standing by the little lake, and Rennie pointed to a moccasin track that lay in the soft ground. The foot that made it was shapely, rather small, and straight along the inner line. The toes were spread widely, naturally.

"That's funny," said Rennie.

"Why?" Bush asked. "It's some Injun. He jumped from there onto that log. I s'pose he wanted water without wettin' his feet."

"What's an Injun doin' here?"

"What's an Injun doin' any place?" Bush countered with the scorn of the old-timer. "S'pose you loosen up some. You know as much about Injuns as I do."

"Well, we ain't met this Injun," said Rennie, "so he's travelin' the same way we are. Maybe he's just one of a bunch that's in here huntin'. But I was tellin' you about how old Paul Sam come to Angus' wife's place last night. He was lookin' for Blake. 'Course you heard what was said about Blake and his granddaughter. I just wondered."

Bush removed his hat and scratched his head.

"By gosh, I wonder!" he observed. "He's mighty old, but it might be. He ain't no fish-eatin' flat-face Siwash. He's a horse Injun—one of the old stock. But he *is* darn old."

"He thought a heap of the girl," said Rennie. "He sent her to school. He was goin' to make her all same white girl."

"Uh-huh!" Bush growled. "A lot of darn fools think they can do tricks like that. But she's a job for the Almighty. Well, if this is the old buck, he couldn't go on a better last war trail, and I wish him a heap of luck. Now let's get goin'."

Night found them at the foot of the range they had crossed. They were now in the valley of the Klimminchuck, a fast stream of the proportions of a river, fed by tributary creeks. Across it rose mountains, range on range, nameless, cut by valleys, pockets, basins and creeks. Their area resembled a tumbled sea. It was a mountain wilderness, little known, unmapped, much as it came from the hands of the Creator.

All the men knew something of this mount in area, but Rennie's knowledge was the most extensive. His was the restlessness, the desire to see what lay beyond, of the pioneer. He had made long incursions, alone. Bush leaned on this knowledge. Around the fire that night, pipes alight, they held council.

"They've turned upriver," said Bush. "If they keep on for the headwaters they get into mighty bad country, hey, Dave?"

"Mighty bad," Rennie agreed. "They couldn't get no place."

"And they ain't outfitted to winter. Do they know she's bad up there?"

"Sure they know. Anyhow, Gavin does. My tumtum is they'll ford above here and try for a clean get-away, maybe up Copper Creek, right across the mountains."

"Did you ever hear of anybody gettin' plum' through, say to Cache River, that way?"

"I've heard of it—yes. Old Pete Jodoin claimed he made her. And one time I run onto an old Stoney buck and he told me how, long ago, his people used to come down huntin' onto this here Klimmin, but they don't do it no more."

"Pete Jodoin was an old liar," said Bush, "and so's any Stoney, on gen'ral principles. But it's funny the places you can go if you know how. Think these French boys would know enough to make a trip like that?"

"Gavin knows a lot about these hills," Rennie replied. "He's hunted in 'em a lot by himself. He can pack near as much as a pony, and it's darn hard to say where he went and didn't go."

"Well," said Bush, "I only hope we don't lose their trail."

But in the morning the trail of the fugitives led straight to the ford, crossed it and held up the farther side. They came to the mouth of Copper Creek, a delta with much gravel wash, but the trail of the fugitives, in place of turning up the Copper, led straight on up the valley trail. A couple of miles on, just after crossing a patch of rocky ground, Turkey who was in the lead pulled up and dismounted.

"What's the matter, kid?" Bush asked.

"Matter!" Turkey exclaimed. "Why there isn't a shod horse in this bunch of tracks we're following."

Investigation showed that Turkey was right. They had been riding on the tracks of unshod horses, presumably of an Indian hunting party. And as they had trampled on these with their own shod horses it was going to be hard to ascertain just how far they had gone on this false trail. But Rennie had his own idea of a short cut.

"They made the side jump somewheres on these here rocks," he said. "They figgered we'd go hellin' along on the tracks of them barefoots. Now this bad ground is the end of that there shoulder you see, and she runs back and dips down on the other side of the Copper."

"Sounds reas'nable," Bush admitted. "Then we go back to the Copper."

The two were standing together apart from the others.

"Look over there," said Rennie, "and line up this rock with that lone cottonwood. What do you see?"

Bush looked along the line indicated. "By gosh," he ejaculated, "that cottonwood's *blazed!*"

"Blazed both sides," Rennie informed him. "I been there. And farther on there's another tree blazed. Fresh."

"Lord—ee!" said Bush. "Them French boys wouldn't do that. You think it's the old buck?"

Rennie nodded. "He's wiser'n we are; also closer to 'em. He's playin' a lone hand, so he has to wait his chance at Blake. He figgers Angus will be after Blake, and as he may run into bad luck himself he wants to make sure somebody lands him. He don't know why the other boys are there, but he knows there must be some good reason, because they're in a hurry and tryin' to hide their trail. So on gen'ral principles he blazes that cottonwood where he strikes their tracks where they've turned off, and keeps goin'."

"Uh-huh!" Bush agreed. "I guess we better not tell them Mackay boys about the Injun. They'd be for crowdin' things, and likely mess 'em up. They don't want nobody to get ahead of 'em. I wisht I hadn't told 'em what old Braden said. But it seemed right they should know."

"So it is right," said Rennie. "Adam Mackay hadn't no gun. She was murder. Only thing, I don't savvy it bein' Gavin French. Givin' the devil his due, he's all *man*. And Braden was such a *darn* liar. Well, there's many a card lost in the shuffle turns up in the deal."

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE RED AVENGER.

Many miles beyond the headwaters of Copper Creek four men rode along the crest of a sparsely timbered summit. Their horses were weary, gaunted with scant, frost-burned feed. The riders were unkempt, unshaven, their eyes reddened by much star-

ing into distances and the ceaseless pour of the mountain winds. The wind was now blowing strongly. It was very cold, and they bent against it, their hats pulled low, their collars high. Along the summit on which they rode and even along its flanks lay thin snow, the first of the coming winter. But above, on the higher ranges, it lay thickly white on the peaks and in the great gulches, promise of the twenty or thirty or forty feet of it which would fall before spring, as it had fallen on that high roof of the world for ages.

On the second day on the Copper the fugitives had discovered that they had not shaken off pursuit. It clung to them doggedly, tenaciously. Once through binoculars they had seen their pursuers across the width of a mountain valley. Little figures, seven of them, had ridden across the field of the lens focused on a barren patch of hillside. They could make a very fair guess at the identity of some of the men. With the discovery they had made extra speed.

Then they had got off the trail, which was ancient, faint, overgrown. Left to himself Gavin, who was the pilot, would likely have steered a correct course, for he had much of that intuition which for lack of a better term may be called sense of direction, and an eye for the general configuration of country. But he was in a hurry and his brothers obtruded advice. And so Gavin went astray. Half a day's travel converted suspicion of this to certainty. The only thing to do was to angle forward in the general direction in which the old trail might be supposed to lie.

It is one thing to travel following the line of least resistance; but it is quite another to hold for any definite objective point. Immediately, obstacles interposed. All of a sudden, as it seemed, things went wrong. Their way was barred by swift creeks, rocks, tangled windfalls piled high. These had to be circumnavigated. One pack pony was drowned in a sudden dip of what looked like a fordable stream. The other slipped, sprained his shoulder and could not travel. They shot him, and took his load between them. At last they regained what was presumably the old trail. The one redeeming feature was that in their wanderings they might have shaken off pursuit. But the next morning, looking back, behind and below them but on their line of travel, they saw smoke. The pursuit had even gained.

Now the old trail grew better, clearer, so that they did not have to worry about that; but they did worry about the way their pursuers hung on. Of what profit was it to traverse this sea of mountains and emerge with these hunters at their heels? As they rode, bending against the keen wind that swept the great ridge, this problem lay in the mind of each.

But Blake viewed it from an angle of his own. He had thrown in his lot with his brothers in panic, relying on them, feeling the safety of numbers. But the pursuit that dogged was primarily of them and not of him. Then he had made a mistake in joining them. Garland was a wise bird in striking off by himself. That was what he should have done. He should have known it would be assumed that he had gone with his brothers. He had been a fool.

And there was another consideration. He knew very well that the boys did not intend to be taken. If he stayed with them he would have to fight. Angus, or Turkey, or even Rennie would shoot him on sight, and in all probability one or more of them was with the bunch behind. Obviously the thing to do was to quit his brothers and let them draw the pursuit. But the devil of it was he had no money. They, however, had what they had taken from Braden. He did not know how much, but it must be a lot. They ought to share up with him. He considered that he had a grievance against them.

Toward evening they came to the end of the ridge and began a long descent into a high valley. They struck timber and shelter from the wind, and water. There they camped. But though feed was short and frost-burned, they dared not let their horses range, keeping them on ropes.

Supper over they sat close to the fire, smoking, following their own thoughts. Gerald regarded the blaze through half-closed eyes; Gavin, motionless, his chin in his hand, stared straight ahead; but young Larry, on one elbow, frowning, impatient, jerked cones and bits of stick at the fire with vicious flips of the wrist. Finally he sat upright.

"Oh, what the *hell!*" he said, in tones of nervous irritation.

Gerald's half-veiled eyes shifted to him; Gavin turned his head.

"Well?" the latter asked.

"What's the use of this?" the young man demanded. "How long are we going to be

chased all over these hills. I wouldn't kick if we were making a get-away—but we aren't. This bunch is right on our heels. What good does it do us to keep going? Not a damned bit! Wherever we come out they'll be right on top of us."

"The kid's right," Gerald observed.

"Well?" said Gavin again.

"Why not let it come to a show-down now?" Larry asked. "Let's make a stand. There's only seven of them, near as we can tell." He laughed recklessly. "Whoever loses out stays in these damned hills for keeps."

"Larry's right," said Gerald again.

"He may be," Gavin admitted. "Make a stand, hey?" He stretched his great arms slowly. "Four of us, seven of them. Well, I'm game, if you are. They're apt to have some pretty good men. Some of us are due to stay in these hills, as Larry says."

"Sure," Gerald agreed. "But the hills are better than the pen. We're all in the same boat."

"I don't know about that," Blake put in.

"Since you mention it," said Gerald, "maybe we're not. If young Turkey or Rennie is with that bunch they're out to get you." Blake shifted uneasily, and Gerald sneered. "I'll bet a hundred they *do* get you, too."

"You want the big end," said young Larry.

"You talk about being in the same boat," said Blake. "Well I didn't shoot Braden, nor get any of his money. You held out on me. You thought you could get it yourselves. You wouldn't let me in on it."

"Well?"

"Well, why the devil should I help you stand off that bunch, then? They're after you, not me."

"Has anybody asked you to?" Gerald retorted. "And nobody asked you to come with us, if it comes to that."

"You had the fear of God in your heart and you begged to come," Larry told him. "You say you shot up Mackay, but you wouldn't tell why. And now, when things are getting hot, you want to quit and sneak off by yourself. I know what you're thinking. Quit and be damned, then! You never were any good. You never had the sand of a white rabbit."

Blake blustered, cursing his younger brother. The latter leaped to his feet. But Gavin interposed.

"Sit down, Larry. Blake, do you want to quit us? If you do, say so. There are no strings on you."

"If I did want to, I couldn't," Blake growled. "You know blame' well I haven't got any money."

Gavin eyed him in silence for a moment.

"I'll fix the money part," he said. Reaching into his war bag he drew forth a package of bills. He split it in half without counting, tossing one-half to Blake as he would have tossed a bone to a dog. "There you are! Anything else?"

"Well, I don't want——" Blake began, but Gavin cut him short.

"You needn't lie. I've seen this in the back of your mind for days. You'll go now, whether you want to or not! Our trails fork in the morning, and you play your own hand. But if you try to save your hide by helping that bunch back there, I'll kill you. And that's cold!"

Blake could not meet the cold blue eyes that bored into his.

"You held out on me in the first place," he said. "This is your show, not mine."

"You——" Larry began.

"Shut up!" said Gavin. "Let him alone, Take what grub you want in the morning, Blake, and go your own way. And now I'm going to sleep."

He rolled his blanket around him and lay down. Gerald and Larry followed his example. Blake, to show his indifference, sat by the fire for a time, smoking sullenly; but soon he too turned in.

It was dark when he awoke, but Gavin was already cooking breakfast, Larry and Gerald rolling blankets. He shared the meal, but nobody spoke to him. Larry brought in three horses, but Blake had to go for his own. Fresh snow, fallen in the night, lay on the ground, but it was merely a skift which would go with the sun.

The east was rose and gold when they mounted. High to the westward the sun, as yet invisible, struck the eastern face of a great, snow-wrapped peak, playing on it dazzlingly. The cold of the high altitudes nipped; the breath of the gaunt horses hung in steam.

At the head of the little cavalcade Gavin led the way down a sloping shoulder into the valley. Blake followed, uncertain what to do. When the valley opened Gavin pulled up.

"Here's where we break, Blake."

"All right," he replied sullenly. "Go ahead. I'm not stopping you."

"I said we broke here."

"I've got to get out of these mountains, haven't I? This is the only way."

"You wanted to quit us," said Gavin, "and now you have to."

"All right," Blake replied. "I'll quit you, if you want it that way."

Without a word of farewell his brothers rode on. Blake watched them go. Their wordless contempt had stung him, and he hated them. He hoped sincerely that they would be caught.

His own immediate plans were simple. He would ride a few miles off the trail till Bush and his posse went by. Then he would make up his mind just what to do. He might take the back trail when they had gone on. He would see.

He took care to leave the trail on rocky ground. The thin snow which still lay was unfortunate, but did not greatly matter once he was off the trail. In an hour or two it would be gone. He rode for a mile, which for his purpose was as good as five or ten, and dismounting let his horse feed. He found a place where the sun struck warmly, filled his pipe and lay down, his back against a rock.

He counted the money which Gavin had thrown him. It amounted to more than two thousand dollars. That would help some. He was better off than if he had stayed with his brothers. Lord, yes! He was safe as a church.

His eyes half closed, he enjoyed his pipe, thinking things over. He had made a mess of that Mackay business. When you came right down to it, he should not have laid hands on Faith. But he would have had the deeds out of her if Garland had not weakened. But for Garland there would have been no necessity for this get-away. Garland had got him into the thing. Damn Garland! And damn women! They were all fools. Take that klootch. How the devil could she expect a white man to marry her? She wasn't bad for a klootch, but as a wife —good night!

The pipe had lost its flavor. Blake tapped it out, rose, and started back with an involuntary cry. Just back of the rock against which he had been leaning stood Paul Sam.

The old Indian raised his rifle.

"S'pose you move," he said, "you go mimaloos." Blake froze into immobility.

"You go mimaloos, anyway," the old man added; "but first me talk to you."

A great fear laid hold upon Blake. The old Indian's features were impassive, but his eyes were bleak and hard. He lowered the rifle to the level of his waist, but its muzzle still dominated. Blake's rifle leaned against the rock, out of reach. His six-shooter was in his belt, but he knew better than to try for it. He stood motionless, staring at the seamed features of the Indian.

"Me talk to you," Paul Sam repeated in soft, clucking gutterals. "Ole man, me; young man, you. You white man; me Injun. Very ole man, me. All the men that were young with me go mimaloos many years ago. My wife she go mimaloos. My son and his wife they go mimaloos. Only one of my blood is left, my son's daughter —Mary!"

He paused for a moment.

"There is no one else of my blood. Me raise hiyu kuitan, hiyu moosmoos, all for her when we die. One time this country all Injun. Pretty soon no more Injun. All white. Injun way no good now. All white man's way. So me send her to school to learn the white man's way.

"She come back to my house. When me look at her me think of many things, of many people who go mimaloos many years ago. It is good for an ole man to have the young of his blood in his house, for in them his youth lives.

"There comes a time when this girl who is the last of my blood, is sad. No more laugh; no more sing. Me not know why. Me ole man. Mebbe-so me blind ole fool. Me never think of—that! When she is dead —then me hear of *you!*"

The Indian paused. Blake spoke, moistening dry lips.

"I hadn't anything to do with Mary."

"You lie!" the old man returned. "You bring shame on her and on me. So me kill you."

There was no passion in his voice; but there was finality, judgment inexorable. It was the logical conclusion, worked out, demonstrated according to his rules. The rifle rose a little.

Blake's face blanched. In fancy, as he stared at it, he could see the red stab of flame leap and feel the shock of lead. Was there no way of escape? He glanced around. There was nothing save the mountain wilderness, the serene heights of the peaks, the

blue autumn sky, a soaring golden eagle. His eyes came back to the rifle muzzle.

"Mebbe-so you like pray?" Paul Sam suggested calmly. Blake found his voice.

"I have money," he said. "Look! lots of money. Take it. For God's sake, don't kill me. I didn't mean—that——"

For the first time a glint of bitter anger leaped into the old man's eyes.

"Money!" he said. "You think I take money for a dead woman of my blood and for my shame! Now me kill you all same wolf!"

The rifle rose, steadied, pointed at Blake's heart. The old finger crooked on the trigger. The hammer fell with a click. For some reason—worn firing pin, weak spring, or defective cartridge—the weapon failed to explode.

Paul Sam's hand jerked down with the lever to throw another shell into place. But Blake in that instant of reprieve took his chance. With a leap he hurled himself forward and caught the barrel, throwing it aside, feeling the flame of the explosion heat the metal beneath his fingers. The report smashed out in the stillness of the valley, racketing and rolling against the hills.

Blake wrenched the rifle from the old man's hands and threw it far. His fear was gone, his face contorted with passion. He reached for his revolver. As he did so Paul Sam drew a nine-inch knife from his beaded scabbard and struck as a snake strikes.

With a screaming oath Blake shoved the muzzle of the six-shooter against him and pulled the trigger. The blunt report was muffled by the body. But again the knife, now red to the hilt, rose and fell, and again the gun barked like a kenneled dog. And then Blake reeled backward, his eyes wide, the gun escaping from his hand, and fell on his back horribly asprawl. With him fell Paul Sam. But the old Indian's fingers were locked around the haft of the knife, and the haft stood out of Blake's breast. And so they lay together as the rolling echoes died and the stillness of the great hills came again.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE GREAT SHOW-DOWN.

Down the slope from the wind-swept summit into the valley rode the posse of Jake Bush. Their horses, too, were gaunted with scant feed and hard work. Like the men who had preceded them these were unkempt, strained of eye. Rennie rode in the lead, his eyes on the trail. The eyes of the others prodded and tested the valley into which they were descending.

By various signs they knew they were closing the gap which separated them from their quarry. When they reached the abandoned camp they dismounted and Rennie and Bush tested the ashes.

"Warm where they ain't wet," said Bush. "This is the earliest we've struck their camp yet. They made slow time yesterday. Can't be many hours ahead."

"Looks to me like their horses is playin' out," Rennie agreed. "Well, let's get goin'."

They rode on down the valley. The trail was plain, and the tracks of horses in the vanishing light snow. They strung along at a steady jog.

From the left, clean and sharp came the vibrant crash of a rifle shot. Instantly the hills took it up, flinging it in echoes back and forth. But with the echoes came other shots, not clear but blunt, muffled, multiplying the riot of sound. They jerked their horses to a standstill.

"Not more'n a mile away," said Rennie. "Them boys is farther ahead. It can't be them."

"We'll darn soon see," said Bush.

They turned in the direction of the shots, spreading out, riding slowly. And presently they came upon a pony standing with dropped reins.

"Why," Turkey exclaimed, "it's Paul Sam's! I'd know that cayuse anywhere."

There was no mistaking the calico pony. Angus, too recognized it. If Paul Sam were there it could be but for one purpose.

"Ride slow," Bush advised. "We don't want to overlook anything."

But in less than five hundred yards they came upon tragedy. Paul Sam and Blake lay as they had fallen. In the background a gaunt horse raised his head for a moment from his browsing.

They dismounted, ringing the prostrate figures around. Bush removed his hat, not out of respect for the dead, but to scratch his head.

"Gosh!" he observed inadequately. Rennie loosened the old fingers from the knife haft and made a swift examination. He picked up a rifle cartridge, unexploded, with the cap faintly dinted.

"Missed fire!" he said. "Then Blake took the gun away from him and went for

his six-shooter and the old man went for his knife. Lord!"

Angus said nothing. He felt he had been defrauded, hardly used. By day and by night one vision had haunted him—Faith's soft throat, bruised and discolored. Just so he had made up his mind to kill Blake, with his hands, repaying him measure for measure. His disappointment was bitter.

"The old man beat you to it," said Rennie, "but I guess he had the right to, if he could."

Angus nodded. It was true enough. But Turkey was picking up the scattered money which Blake had let fall. It opened a field for speculation. No doubt this was some of Braden's money, and the brothers had divided with Blake. But why had Blake quit them? Bush made a shrewd guess.

"Blake wasn't no game bird," he said. "He'd quit any time rather than go to a show-down. Mebbe that was what he was tryin' to do."

"And bumped into one," said Rennie. "But I wonder! We're gettin' close, and it ain't so far to the Cache now. It wouldn't do 'em no good to get there with us right behind. They might make a stand and take a chance."

"Or bushwhack us," the deputy suggested. "Us ridin' along single file in some bad place and them shootin' from cover—hell! we'd be down and kickin' before we could draw a gun."

"That's so," Rennie replied thoughtfully. "We better go careful. Well, I s'pose we better try to bury these dead folks while we're here."

"The Injun, anyway," said Bush. "Give him the best of it."

They did the best they could, and built above with stones. Then they went back and took up the pursuit, holding on till darkness hid the trail. By daylight they were away, and even earlier than before they came upon the deserted camp.

And now the old trail began to ascend. It led into a country wild and rugged, the jagged vertebræ of a mountain range seamed and scarred with gulch and cañon. It was very bad for horses and very hard work for everybody. But signs showed that they were very near their quarry.

"We're darn near on top of 'em," said Rennie, and thereafter he rode with gun in hand.

But it was late in the afternoon when they got their first glimpse of the fugitives, who were rounding a bare shoulder ahead and above them. Two were riding and one was leading his horse. They themselves were not seen, for a growth of brush at that point of the trail intervened. They looked to Bush for instructions.

"There ain't much sun left and they'll be goin' into camp soon," the deputy said. "We'll leave the horses here with one man, and the rest of us go ahead. While they're makin' camp we'll stand 'em up. What say, Dave?"

"Who stays with the horses?"

"Turkey," Bush decided. "He's the youngest."

"I'm damned if I do," Turkey rebelled. "Stay yourself. You're the oldest."

Bush grinned. "Can't, sonny, though I'd love to." He drew a dilapidated pack of cards from his pocket and spread them fanwise. "Draw one. Low stays. Deuce is low."

Drury drew low, and cursed his luck. McClintock on one knee lacing a shoepack grinned at him.

"I wisht you'd sponge off my cayuse's back, Joe. He's gettin' sore. While you're about it, with nothin' else to do, you might go over the whole lot."

Drury's retort put his first outburst in the shade. Laughter stirred him to fresh efforts.

"Now, boys!" said Bush.

He took the lead, Rennie behind him, then Angus.

Angus was glad to be out of the saddle, and glad, too, that the end of the chase was at hand. With the death of Blake much of his interest in it had vanished. There was still Gavin, who if Braden's dying declaration was to be believed had killed his father. But strangely enough he felt little or no enmity toward him. He thought he should feel more. Turkey, behind him, spoke.

"I guess this is the finish of that bunch. If they start anything, we want to get Gavin—if he killed father."

Angus was silent for a moment. There was the possibility that it would not be a one-sided affair. He was not troubled for himself, but Turkey was rash, impetuous.

"Don't take any chances, kid, if there is trouble."

"Not a chance," Turkey replied cheer-

fully. "Anybody that beats me to the trigger will have to go some."

"That wasn't what I meant. Look after yourself. Don't get hurt."

"Are you trying to tell me to play it safe?" Turkey demanded with virtuous indignation. "Why I ought to report you to Bush. Look after yourself. You're married. Play it safe! Huh! You bet I will —with a fast gun."

But the sun was going down. Unless the fugitives suspected something they would soon be making camp. Now and then Bush stopped to listen. None now spoke above a whisper. It was like the last hundred yards of a long, hard stalk of big game. In this case the game was big enough, and dangerous. Mistakes could not be afforded.

Bush stopped suddenly. Distinct in the stillness came the quick "lick-lock" of an ax. The deputy nodded.

"Camped. Go easy, now. We want to pull this off without smoke. But have your guns ready."

They came upon the camp. It was on a little flat at the mouth of a wild draw, a little glade fringed with brush, through which ran a trickle of a spring creek. At one side the horses, unsaddled, grazed. Gavin, at the other side, was dragging in a dry pole for firewood. Gerald knelt beside a freshly-kindled fire. Larry was getting food from a sack.

It was Larry who saw them almost at the instant they saw him. He cried a warning. Gerald rose swiftly. Gavin dropped his pole. Bush stepped forward and held up his hand.

"I want you, boys," he said.

"You can't have us," Gerald replied. "That's cold, Bush."

"Don't be foolish," Bush advised. "I want you, and I'm going to get you. And that's cold, too."

"Then fly at it!" Gerald cried, and with the words jerked his gun and fired.

Bush staggered, twisted and went down; but he drew his gun as he did so and began to shoot from the ground. The lonely mountain camp became an inferno of shattering, rolling sound.

Angus felt his hat lift as in a sudden squall. At the same moment Turkey spun half around and against him, destroying his aim.

"I'm all right!" the youngster gasped, and in proof of his assertion fired.

Bustede, his right arm hanging, had dropped his rifle and was struggling to draw his six-shooter with his left hand. McClintock, on one knee, was working the lever of his rifle like a saw. Rennie, a gun in either hand, unhooked them in a rattling roar.

Suddenly Gerald pitched forward on his face. Larry doubled up and went down. But Gavin was apparently unhurt. He saw his brothers fall. For an instant he stood looking at them. Then he turned and bounded for the sheltering brush. With the rush of a bull moose he crashed into it while a sleet of lead cut twigs around him, and disappeared.

"Git him!" Bush croaked from the ground. "Git him, somebody. Oh, sink my soul for all rotten shootin'! Six guns—and he makes the timber! Agh-r!"

Angus stooped for an instant over Turkey. The youngster, very white of face, was sitting on the ground; but he was out-cursing Bush.

"Are you hurt much? Where?"

"Not much. My shoulder. Get him, damn him! Get him for father!"

Angus found Rennie running beside him. It was impossible to trail the fugitive. All they could do was to keep on up the draw and trust to luck. But the pace and the rough ground soon told on Rennie.

"I can't travel no more," he gasped. "Too old. You go ahead."

"Go back and help the boys," Angus said. "There's a moon to-night and I may not be back. If I don't find him I'll come in in the morning."

"Be darn sure you do come in. Don't take no chances."

Angus ran on up the draw. Now that he was alone he began to put forth his strength and speed while the light should last. He was sure that Gavin would make for the higher ground. He would cross the summit of that range, and go ahead for the Cache. Though he had neither food nor outfit he had his six-shooter and presumably ammunition and matches. Angus knew that he himself would suffer little more than inconvenience if he were in Gavin's place.

The draw narrowed, and steep hills closed in on either hand. He turned to the right and began to climb. Darkness overtook him and he stopped. The cold chilled his sweating body with the cessation of motion, but Gavin was as badly off. When the moon rose he went on again, but it was slow

work. Objects were distorted. Shadows lay where he would have had light. Once he slipped and fell, slithering twenty feet and barely saving himself from an almost perpendicular drop of a hundred. He crawled back with difficulty, but his rifle was gone. He had heard it clang far below him. However, he had his belt gun, and so was on a par with Gavin.

His objective was what seemed to be a notch in the summit. It was what he would make for were he in Gavin's place. He toiled upward methodically, without hurry now, for there might be a long trail ahead. If Gavin could go to the Cache so could he. The timber began to thin out, to stunt. Trees were dwarfed, twisted by the mountain winds, mere miniatures. Presently they ceased altogether. He was above timberline.

There the thin snow partially covered the ground, increasing the difficulty of travel. But its actinic qualities gave more light. It was past midnight, and the moon was well up. He had been traveling for more than seven hours.

For a moment he paused to rest, his lungs feeding greedily on the thin, cold air, and surveyed the scene below. It was a black fur of treetops, rolling, undulating, cleft with lines of greater darkness indicating greater depths. He could look over the tops of lesser mountains. Above were the peaks of the range, whitened spires against the sky.

In those far heights of the mountain wilderness one seemed to touch the rim of space itself. The moon, the night, the height produced an effect of unspeakable vastness. It seemed to press in, to infold the tiny atom crawling upon and clinging to the surface of the earth. There finite and infinite made contact. It was like the world's end, the Ultima Thule of ancient men.

Some such thoughts, vague, scarcely formed, passed through his mind. The ranch, plowed land, houses, seemed to belong to another world. Their proportions dwindled in the mind, as did their importance.

Once more he began to climb, and now that he was close to the summit the going was easier, up a gradual slope white with snow. Suddenly he stopped, staring. There, plainly marked, clear in the moonlight, was the track of a moccasin-clad foot.

There was no doubt that it was Gavin's. Knowing his own pace Angus knew that the big man could not be far ahead. No doubt he would keep going, over the summit and down the other side, for timber. Once in the timber, with a fire, he would rest. His trail across would be covered by the first wind. He would not suspect that any one would or could follow him by night. No doubt he thought he had made a clean getaway.

Angus followed the trail easily by the bright moonlight, noting grimly that the length of the stride was almost identical with his own. The prints were clean, showing that the feet had been cleanly lifted and set down, token of energy unimpaired.

When he reached the summit he took a careful survey. It was a desolate plateau, swept and scoured by the winds and rains and snow of unnumbered centuries. On it nothing grew. Here and there bowlders loomed blackly. But nothing moved. Apparently, it was as bare of life as the dead mountains of the moon. The trail led straight on. It seemed that the fugitive had crossed the divide and was now descending the other side.

Satisfied of this, Angus followed the trail at speed. Now and then it turned out to avoid a bowlder, but otherwise it went straight ahead, as though no doubt of direction existed in its maker's mind. Presently it swung around a huge rock and then turned north. Angus glanced casually at the bowlder and passed by; but he had taken no more than three strides in the new direction when a voice behind him commanded:

"Stop! Put up your hands!"

CHAPTER XLVI.

STRONG MEN.

The tone forbade disobedience or delay. Angus turned to face a gun in the hands of Gavin French. The latter peered at him for a moment and laughed shortly.

"I thought it was you," he said. "Nobody else could have made as good time. You're a good guesser, too. Well—unbuckle your belt with your left hand and let it drop. Keep your right hand up. That's it. Now step away from it."

Having no option Angus obeyed, cursing himself internally for being fooled by the old trick of doubling back. Gavin lowered his gun.

"You can take 'em down," he said. "Now what's the next play?"

"That's up to you," Angus told him.

"Does look like it," the big man admitted. "But you know damned well I can't shoot you in cold blood. If I roped you up here and left you, you might not be found. I can't take you with me. So it's partly up to you. This is hell's own rotten mess from start to finish. I knew it would be, from the time Jerry lost his head and plugged Braden. I suppose he's dead?"

"Yes."

"And Jerry and Larry, too?"

"I think so. I didn't wait to make sure."

"Sure to be," Gavin said calmly. "Jerry came ahead on his face and Larry wilted in a bunch. They got it, all right. I had a fool's luck. Any of your bunch get it hard?"

"I don't think so. We were lucky."

"You sure were. We were going to hold you up to-morrow, if we found a good place, but you got the jump on us. You were closer than we thought. So it seems I'm the only one left, bar Blake, and I don't count him. He quit us yesterday to save his skin. Maybe he was wise, at that."

"Blake is dead."

The big man exclaimed in astonishment, "Dead! How?"

Angus told him. Also he told why he himself had hunted Blake. Gavin French uttered a deep malediction.

"If I had known this," he said, "he would never have come with us. I think I would have handled him myself. But I don't suppose you believe that."

"Yes," Angus returned. "You are a man, and he never was."

Gavin French eyed him for a moment. "I guess you're right—about him, anyway," he said. "He got what was coming to him. Well, that leaves me—and Kathleen." He shook his head moodily. "I tell you straight, Mackay, that I'm not going to be taken. I've stood you up, but I don't know what I'm going to do with you. If you'll give me your word to go back to your bunch and give me that much start, you may pick up your gun and go."

"Will you answer me one question, straight?" Angus asked.

"Anything you like," the big man promised. "It won't make much difference now."

"Gavin French, did you kill my father?"

The big man started violently. "Did I —— What makes you ask that?"

"You promised me a straight answer. But Braden said so—before he died."

Gavin French did not reply immediately. "Braden was a rotten liar all his life," he said at last. "But I promised you a straight answer, and I keep my word. Yes, I killed your father—at least, I suppose that's what it comes to."

Angus drew a long breath. Its hissing intake was clear in the silence.

"You suppose!" he said. "My father was not armed. Do you think I will let you go, gun or no gun. One of us stays on this summit, Gavin French!"

"In your place I would say just that," Gavin admitted. "But I am going to tell you how it happened; and then I am going to let you take up your gun and do what you like. And just remember that if I wanted to lie I would have done it in the first place."

He paused a moment frowning at Angus.

"The day your father was shot," he began, "I was on the range looking for horses, and I had my rifle. In the afternoon I was riding up the long coulee by Cat Creek when I heard a shot ahead, and in a few minutes I came upon a steer staggering along. Then he rolled over and lay kicking. I got off my horse, and saw your brand on him, and that he had been shot. Just then your father came tearing up the coulee. He saw me beside the dead steer, my rifle in my hand, and naturally he thought I had done the killing. He had no earthly use for me, and besides that he and I had had some trouble a week before over a two-year old. So when he rode up I knew there was going to be more trouble, and I was dead right.

"He didn't give me much chance to explain, and he didn't get off his horse. He damned me for a liar and a rustler, and suddenly he reached down and grabbed the barrel of my rifle with both hands. I've often wished I had let him take it, but by that time he was so damned mad that I wasn't going to let him have a gun, and I was pretty hot myself. So I hung onto it and tried to twist it out of his hands. Then his horse started to back. I was dragged along, holding to the gun, and my hold slipped. I swear I don't know how it happened, unless my slipping hand lifted the hammer, but anyway the rifle went off.

"He let go then, and his horse bolted. I didn't know he was badly hurt, because he was riding all right. In fact I wasn't sure he was hit at all. That was the last I saw of

him. My own horse was frightened by the shot and it took me some time to catch him. I rode two or three miles looking for your father, but I didn't see him. I would have gone to your ranch, but I was afraid that would lead to more trouble, because I thought the first thing he would do would be to organize himself with a gun. So I went home and kept my mouth shut. The next day I heard he was dead. That's all. And there's your gun. If you feel like playing even, go to it."

But Angus as he listened knew that Gavin French was telling the exact truth. He could visualize the tragedy of that bygone day of his boyhood. His father's actions, as related by Gavin, were in exact keeping with his character. But in the end, though convinced that Gavin had fired with intent to kill, he had died in grim silence rather than leave to his son a heritage of hate and revenge.

"I believe it happened as you say it did," he said. "There is nothing to play even for."

The big man sighed deeply. "It's not every man who would believe it," he said; "but it's true. I know I should have come forward and told how it was, then, but I had only my own word. If your father had told anybody about the two-year old and the words we had had, it would have been bad. So I just kept quiet."

"How did Braden know?"

"From Texas Pete. I believe that Siwash shot the steer himself and saw what happened. Braden told me the Indian had told him the whole thing. That was a year after, and Pete had broken his neck with a bad cayuse. Braden tried to hold it over me till I put the fear of God in his heart one night when we were alone. I wouldn't do his dirty work, and I didn't know till too late what Blake and Jerry had done. I mean about your ditch. Larry wasn't in that. I couldn't give my brothers away, could I? Oh, it's a rotten mess from start to finish!"

He stared gloomily across the moonlit spaces, frowning heavily.

"So there's the whole thing," he said. "I've felt like telling you before, but what was the use? From first to last my family has done you dirt. Well, I'm the only man left, and I'll pay for the crowd. I'll be the goat. Short of surrendering, which I won't do, I'll give you any satisfaction you like. If you want it with a gun, all right. But we're two big, skookum men. I don't know which of us is the better, though I think I am. If you can best me to-night, in a fair fight without weapons, I'll go back with you; and if I best you you go back alone. What do you say?"

Angus knew that Gavin meant it. The proposal was primitive in conception and simplicity. Perhaps because of that it appealed to him strongly.

"There are not many men who would make that offer," he said.

"I would not make it to any other man," Gavin replied. "Does it go?"

"No."

The big man threw out his hands in a gesture of impatience.

"Then what the devil does?" he demanded. "Why not? You're no more afraid of me than I am of you. What do you want?"

"Nothing," Angus said. "Now that I know how my father died, I have nothing against you. Braden I care nothing about. So I am going back the way I came. But I am glad you do not think me a coward."

Gavin French drew a deep breath and his cold blue eyes for a moment held a curiously soft expression.

"Mackay," he said, "it probably sounds queer, but I have always liked you. And I liked you better after that little fuss we had on Christmas night, for then I knew you were strong as I am strong, and I hoped some day, for the pure fun of it, we might see which of us was the better man. A coward? Lord, no! I know why you are doing this. I'll bet you saw Kathleen."

"Yes," Angus admitted, "I saw her. She told me. But that's not——"

"You needn't lie about it," Gavin said gruffly. "That sort of thing is about all you would lie about. She's a good girl. I—I'm fond of her." He hesitated over the admission. "We were a queer bunch—our family. Stand-off. No slush. Afraid to show that we were fond of each other. That was the way with Kit and me. If I can make this, it will be different in the future. I'm not pulling any repentance stuff, you savvy. What's done is done, and it can't be helped. Well, it's time I was moving."

"How are you fixed for matches and smoking?" Angus asked.

"None too well—if you can spare either."

Angus handed over what he had in his

pockets. "I wish you luck," he said. "I hope you make it—clean."

"I'll make it," Gavin replied calmly, "if it's my luck, and if it isn't I won't. It won't make any difference to anybody but Kit. If it wasn't for her I wouldn't care—either way."

"Don't worry about her. We will see that she wants for nothing. Her home will be with us if she will make it there, till you are ready for her."

"That's white of you," Gavin said with something very like emotion in his voice; "but she'd better do as we had arranged. Tell her I'll make it, sure. And tell Faith—if you don't mind—that I said her husband was a good man—oh, a damned good man!—every way." He was silent for a moment. "Shake?" he said and held out his hand.

Their grips met hard.

"Well, so long," said Gavin.

"So long," said Angus.

The big man nodded and turned north. Angus turned south. In a hundred paces he looked back. Gavin, already indistinct in the deceptive moonlight was standing at the top of a slight rise doing likewise. He waved his hand, turned, and the rise hid him from view. Though Angus watched for some moments he did not reappear. He had crossed the divide.

Then Angus, too, turned again, and realizing for the first time that the night cold of the height had chilled him to the bone struck a brisk pace down the southern slope; while behind him a rising wind broomed the dry snow of the desolate summit, effacing all trace of the trespassing feet of men.

CHAPTER XLVII.

PEACE.

Angus was riding up to the French ranch. He had just parted from his companions. Their homeward progress had been slow because of the wounded men. Turkey and Rennie had gone on toward the home ranch, and Bush and the others toward town. But he had turned off the trail to see Kathleen. He hated his errand, but it was better that he should tell her than leave it to a stranger. He would be glad to get it over and go home—to Faith.

As he approached the house he saw her. Apparently she had seen him coming, for she came down to greet him. He dismounted stiffly. He felt her eyes searching his face.

"Well?" she queried. He shook his head.

"I am sorry, Kathleen. It is bad news."

"I expected it," she said quietly. "Tell me about it—all."

He told her the main facts, omitting details. When he had concluded she sat motionless, her eyes on the glory of the evening sky above the western ranges.

"I am sorry," he said again.

"I understand," she said. "You are sorry that it had to be. I knew what might happen if the boys were overtaken. It was inevitable. Well, they made their choice and took their chance, and it went against them. They would be the last to complain. I think Gavin will tell me more than you have told me—some day. Well, this is the end of a good many things. I was merely waiting for word. To-morrow I am going away."

"There is no need. If you would stay with us——"

"I am just as grateful, but it is best not."

"It may be," he admitted. "Is there anything I can do?"

"If you would take Finn? He's too lively for Faith, but he's a good horse. I hate to sell him to a stranger."

"I will buy him."

"You will not buy him. Are you too proud to do me that kindness?"

"No. I will take him and give him a good home all his life."

"Thank you."

"For taking the gift of a good horse?"

"You know better. Finn and I were friends. He—he may miss me a little." For the first time her voice was not quite steady. "To feel that way about a horse!" she said scornfully. "Well, it's something to be missed—even by a horse."

"I shall miss you," Angus told her.

Her eyes rested on him gravely for a long moment.

"I know what you mean," she said. "You liked me a little, because I was a frank sort of individual. You may think of me now and then, when there is nothing else on your mind. But as for missing me—pshaw! Nobody will miss me. I had no friends."

It was brutally true. Kathleen French, highly organized, sensitive, proud, had repelled friendships. She had hidden real loneliness under a cloak of indifference. Apparently sufficient unto herself, others had

taken her at her own apparent valuation. Her voice was tinged with bitterness. Angus realized vaguely a part of the truth.

"I don't think anybody thought you wanted friends."

"Everybody wants friends," she returned. "Often the people who want them most have not the knack of making them. But I am not complaining. I have always been able to take my medicine without making a very bad face."

"You are a clean, straight, game girl," he said. "One of these days you will marry, and your husband will be a lucky man."

She smiled for the first time, but her mouth twitched slightly.

"I am game enough," she said. "I suppose that goes with the breed—like other things. Oh, yes, I am game enough to run true under punishment. But as for marrying—I don't think so. I was in love once—or thought I was."

"I didn't know about that," Angus said in surprise. "I'm sorry I said anything."

"No, of course you didn't know. Nobody did—not even the man in the case. He married another girl."

"He lost a mighty fine wife," Angus said.

"That's nice of you. But Heaven knows what sort of wife I'd have made. The girl he married will suit him better. And now I mustn't keep you, Angus. Faith will be waiting. I won't see either of you again. She hasn't much cause to love me or mine, but she has never shown it by word or look. She is real, Angus, and I hope you will be very happy, both of you, all through life. Some day—oh, a long time hence, when the things that are so real and hard now have been dimmed and softened by the years—I may see you both again. Till then—good-by."

Angus took her strong, firm hand in his, and looked into her somber eyes.

"Good-by," he said, "and thank you for your good wishes. Good luck to you and to Gavin. Tell him that. And remember that anything I can do at any time for either you or him will be done cheerfully."

"I will remember," she said. "I wish you and Gavin had known each other better. You would have been friends. You are both real men."

She knew nothing of Gavin's connection with his father's death, for that was one of several things he had not told her. Another was that he had lied to Bush. He had said that he had found no trace of Gavin. Kathleen stood beside him as he mounted, and when, having ridden a few hundred yards, he turned in the saddle and glanced back she was still standing where he had left her, motionless.

But as the French ranch vanished from view Angus drew a long breath. It was more than the relief from the performance of an unpleasant duty. A chapter seemed to have closed, the old order of things ended, a new one begun.

Already the shadows were falling, the hills purple black against the west. Well, he would be home as fast as a good horse could carry him. Turkey would have told Faith, and she would be waiting for him. He shook the big, gaunted chestnut into a fast lope.

But at a sharp bend he met Faith, almost riding her down.

"Why, old girl!" he cried, while Chief's hoofs slid and grooved the trail and the reliable Doughnuts side-stepped expertly. "This is fine!"

"I couldn't wait," she said. "I have been waiting too long already. So when Turkey came home I came to meet you."

He leaned from the saddle and kissed her.

"We had to travel slowly. And somebody had to tell Kathleen. I thought it was better that I should."

"I am very sorry for her."

"So am I. But tell me about yourself. How does it feel to be a grass widow?"

"I'm not going to tell you. I've been worried. I suppose I've been silly. But Jean will tell you all about that. She was always telling me not to worry, cheering me up."

"Has she made it up with Chetwood yet?"

"Well, my goodness!" Faith exclaimed.

"Why, they're not married, are they?"

"No. Why, it went clean out of my mind, but this afternoon when I saw Turkey coming, I ran down to meet him and came around the corner of the wagon shed, and there the two of them were. And they looked as if they had been—well, you know."

"Kissing each other?"

"Yes, it looked like that."

But the ranch came in sight, its broad, fertile acres dim in the fading light. The smell of the fresh earth of fall plowing struck the nostrils, and a tang of wood smoke from new clearing. From the corrals came the voices of cattle. A colt whinnied

in youthful falsetto for his dam. All sounds carried far in the hush of evening.

"Seems odd to think this will be broken up," Angus said. "Houses and streets on the good land; maybe a church on that knoll, a school over yonder. I ought to be glad, because it means money. But I'm not."

"I know," his wife nodded wisely. "I've been a wanderer and a city dweller most of my life, but I can understand how the one spot on all the earth may claim a man. And you'll always want a ranch, and stock, and wide spaces, no matter how much money you have. Oh, yes, boy, I know."

"I guess you are right," he admitted. "I grew up that way. Well, there's plenty of time to think it over. I can take another crop off this." He lifted his head and sniffed the air. "Old girl," he said, "I believe I smell grub—real grub—cooking. And I haven't had a real meal for three days. We were sort of shy coming out, you know."

"My heavens!" Faith cried, "Turkey said the same thing. When I left he was telling Mrs. Foley he would marry her for a pie. Let's hurry."

Some hours later Angus, shaven and fed, sat with Faith enjoying rest and tobacco. It was good to lie back in a chair, to relax, to be in a house again protected from the wind and cold, to look forward to a comfortable bed in place of one blanket and such browse as could be scraped into a heap as a dog scrapes leaves and rubbish to lie on. Though he could sleep anywhere, by virtue of youth and a hard body, he appreciated comfort.

Earlier in the evening Jean, Chetwood and Turkey had borne them company. But the two former had gone, followed by caustic comment from the latter. And soon after that young gentleman had announced that Angus and Faith were a darn sight worse, and that he was going to bed.

Left alone, Faith spoke the thing which was in her mind.

"I am glad," she said, "that it was not you who killed Blake."

"I intended to kill him," he replied, "and I would if it had been my luck to come up with him. But I think I am glad, now, that Paul Sam had the better right."

"The poor old Indian!" Faith said softly.

"Oh, I don't know. If he could talk about it he would say that he couldn't die better. And then he was a very old man."

"But life may be sweet to the old."

"Yes. But when a man is alone, when all of his blood and the friends of his youth and manhood have gone, there can't be much to live for. I would wish to die before that time comes to me."

"Don't talk of dying." She shivered a little. But the chord of melancholy in his being had been struck and vibrated.

"Why not? Talking will not bring death nearer, nor stave it off. 'Crioch onarach!' You have no Gaelic, but it means a good finish—an honorable end to life. And that is the main thing. What does it matter when you die, if you die well? I would not live my last years like a toothless, stiff, old dog, dragging his legs around the house with the sun. I would rather go out with the taste of life sweet in my mouth."

"We have many years before us, you and I," she said. "I think they will be happy years, boy."

"They will be largely what we make them. I remember my father's words when it was near the end with him; and *he* was a hard man. The things worth least in life, he said, were hate and revenge; and the things worth most in life and more in death were love, and work well done, and a heart clean of bitterness. I did not think so then. But now I am beginning to think he was right."

"Yes, he was right," she said.

Fell a long silence. At last Faith took the banjo on her knee, and smiling at her husband began to pick the strings gently. She played at random, snatches of melody, broken, indistinct; old airs, odd, half forgotten. Now and then she sang very softly.

Angus listened in utter content. He seemed to have reached a harbor, a sheltered haven. Toil, struggle, stress seemed far off, faint memories. The spell of the home was upon him in full. Little things—familiar furnishings, the backs of books, pictures—seemed like the smiling faces of old friends. It was, he recognized, the force of contrast with his recent experiences; but it was very pleasant. Softly the banjo talked; and with the haunting murmur of resonant strings came Faith's voice, low but clear, singing to herself rather than to him.

"Hame, laddie, hame, an' it's hame ye'll come to me,
Hame to yer hame in yer ain countree;
Whaur th' ash, a' th' oak an' th' bonnie hazel tree
They be all a-growin' green in yer ain countree."

For a moment the singing ceased, while the banjo whimpered uncertainly as if seeking a new tune. But it steadied to the same air.

"If the bairn be a girl she shall wear a gowden ring;
And if it be a boy he shall fight for his king——"

Something in her voice, a soft, crooning note, caused Angus to stare at the singer. Up from throat to brow a great wave of color swept. But her voice did not falter:

"With his tarpaulin hat and his coat of navy blue
He shall pace the quarter-deck as his daddy used to do!"

THE END.

THE DOUGHBOY

THOUGH he may be sweetened by experience and be as hard as nails, the old-timer is commonly called a sour dough by his fellow miners, just as our American soldier, tough as leather and bearing no relation to bread in the making, is called a doughboy.

Popular nicknames are curious. They frequently take their origin from the most unlikely sources. Nevertheless, we were surprised not long ago to see in the London *Times* an explanation of the term doughboy, the authorship of which was laid to one of them, indeed, and which traced the sobriquet to the exigent use of buttons from women's overcoats on some of the Federal soldiers' uniforms in Civil War days. According to the narrator, a number of troops could not don their uniforms because of the need of buttons. Thereupon the plan was evolved of going about the town in which they were quartered collecting buttons from householders. Most of the contributed buttons were of a large variety then in vogue on the coats of the ladies. A resemblance they had to hard-tack or biscuits decorating the uniforms led to the nickname of doughboy.

This derivation of the term is close to one given by Mr. Richard H. Thornton, an authority on colloquialisms. He says that primarily a doughboy was a dough cake baked for sailors; then it was applied to a brass button of similar shape worn by the infantry; lastly it was tacked on the foot soldier himself. To bear him out, Mr. Thornton cites General and Mrs. Custer. In a letter the general once wrote: "Wasn't I glad I was not a doughboy!" which Mrs. Custer explains in a footnote: "A doughboy is a small, round doughnut served to sailors on shipboard, generally with hash. Early in the Civil War the term was applied to the large, globular brass buttons of the infantry uniform, from which it passed by natural transition to the infantry themselves."

But the latest interpretation of the term doughboy came from one of our invalided soldiers who said that a Frenchwoman hearing the American soldiers alluding to their money as dough, and she being amazed at the amount of it they had, inferred that they were doughboys because they "were made of money."

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The Passing of Quong Tuck

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The guile of the Chinaman is proverbial, and when you have several of the species pitted against one another there is no end of subtle toils

ONE January evening when a living gale was blowing from the southwest, bringing with it a great steady flood of rain, old Captain Gresham told me this story on the pilot boat. The little schooner lay outside the San Francisco bar, tossing on enormous, savage seas; within her cabin we sat, and I enjoyed the fullness of contentment which comes when one listens to the elements battering upon the planks that shelter him. But Captain Gresham was showing signs of restlessness.

He fidgeted in his chair; he hitched his left arm awkwardly and finally he laid his pipe aside. Discomfort had come upon him; he rubbed that left arm vigorously and I saw him frown. Shortly afterward he rose, took off his coat and rolled up his sleeve, baring the huge brown forearm. He gazed intently at it for some moments.

"See this scar?" he said.

Where the thick muscles tapered toward the corded wrist I saw, in angry purple and imprinted deeply in the flesh, standing out clear and unmistakable, the mark of teeth.

"If I'd never a calendar or almanac," said he, "I'd know the nineteenth of January as sure as it came around."

He chafed the ugly mark with his palm. "Every year, this same date, when evenin' grows along, it aches as sharp as if that man was biting me again."

A rising swell made the schooner pitch suddenly; the shadows crept back and forth across the cabin floor under the swinging lamp; the scar lay hidden for a moment in a crawling patch of shade, then showed once more, marring the splendor of the weather-stained skin. Captain Gresham drew down his sleeve.

"'Twas this day o' the year and just about this time o' the night I shook him loose from his dog hold," he said, "and saw that he was dead." He rose and put on his coat. "Queer," he mused, "how I always forget it's the nineteenth of January till that damn bite reminds me of it."

"I've heard that same thing about the scar of a bite," I said, "but I never believed it before. It's strange."

"Aye, strange." He nodded and resumed his seat. "That's the word for it. Nobody's ever been able to explain it to me; not even the doctors that I've asked. Strange is the word. And there was other things that happened to me along of my gettin' that mark that was strange, too. Seemed like they couldn't be true, like I'd been dreamin' 'em. Aye, I sweated some before I was done with that affair."

He sat silent for some time. Outside I could hear the rushing of the waters which encompassed us, the droning of the wind in the rigging, the tramp of sailors' feet on deck, the banging of a block. The lamplight was mellow in here; some coals dropped under the door of the stove. Captain Gresham leaned forward in his chair and began his tale.

'Tis not so many years ago as one would think; changes come fast these days. I had been knockin' around on the high seas, first in one quarter of the globe and then in another, when I found myself in the port of San Francisco without a berth or the prospect of one. I'd sailed as first mate and I'd my master's papers, but there was many a better man than he was wearin' out his shoes lookin' for a chance to earn his livin'. It looked like I was due for a long spell on the beach.

Then I ran acrost Gaspar Littlejohn. He was a lawyer and his office was right on the edge of Chinatown; a queer, bald-headed, little man with rat eyes and a bent nose. An old shipmate introduced me to him and told me that he was honest and aboveboard

in his dealin's, though there might be times when 'twould not look that way. And this Gaspar Littlejohn was lookin' for a skipper who was willin', every now and then, to take a long chance.

Well, to make a long story short, I signed with him. We bought a schooner—that is to say he laid out the money for her and I picked her, but who furnished the cash I never knew. Some Chinese merchants, I've no doubt; he had a many clients amongst 'em. She was as pretty a fore-and-after as ye'd want to clap your eyes on; sold by the government after seizure som'er's up no'th; and I found a good crew for her, most of 'em boat steerers from the whalin' fleet who was only too glad to get a job durin' these dull times.

We cruised up and down the coast on all manner of queer business, and I've no doubt some of our cargoes would of interested the customs officials if they could of laid their hands on us at the right time. But however that may be, my conscience didn't bother me, for I was followin' owner's orders and didn't know what was goin' on myself. As a matter o' fact, I couldn't swear we ever did bring anything crooked into port.

I think, though, that the real use of the schooner would come at odd times when we would sail to some out-o'-the-way port—down in the Gulf of California or mebbe the Galapagos Islands—with a fat, wooden-faced Chinaman all decked out in brocaded silks as passenger, and no cargo at all. Like as not, we'd run down the coast and pick him up after dark; and like as not we'd put him ashore again in the night. Ye see, those were curious days on Dupont Street, when they traded in slave girls like white men trade in cattle; when every rich merchant was payin' protection money to one tong and blackmail money to another; the days of Little Pete—ye've heard of him and his hatchet men and how he got rich by makin' his countrymen pay for the right to stay alive.

Now, the name of this schooner that I was master of was the *Susan B.*, and 'twas the second year that I was with her when I got this scar. By that time I'd got well acquainted with Gaspar Littlejohn, and I'd smoked more'n one cigar with him in his dingy office on a side street up the hill from the main portion of Chinatown. He'd got to trust me and I'd got to know that he was a man of his word. We'd reached port after a run up to Astoria and I'd come ashore and reported to the lawyer. I'd left his office and I was on my way back to the schooner.

'Twas evening; the gas lamps were lit; Dupont Street was all bright, and the sidewalks was crowded down there. Up here on the hill the side street was as quiet as a graveyard. Besides me there was only one man in sight—a fat Chinaman. I stopped to light my pipe and noticed him behind me.

The sea wind was rushin' down the hill carryin' a few scraps of paper and Lord knows what other rubbish before it; it blew out my match and I stepped into a doorway to get the lee of the buildin' wall. I had the pipe goin' directly and I faced around.

The fat Chinaman was passin' me. He was shufflin' along at that queer slidin' walk those fellows have. The gas lamp by the alley two doors down showed him very plain from the tassel on his tight skullcap to the flowers that was embroidered on his thick-soled slippers. His cheeks was full, and there was little shrewd wrinkles around his bright eyes. His purple silk blouse was flappin' in the wind; it bellied out his satin breeches, which he wore tied down at the ankles; and he was leanin' back against the push of it.

He was smokin' a long fat cigar; he'd take a puff or two and then he'd fetch it away from his mouth with a flourish while he blew the smoke in a big cloud. He smiled. Man! He looked like he hadn't a single worry in the whole world; like he was satisfied with every one, and most of all with himself.

And he was rich; ye could see that with half an eye. The bracelets on his wrist was worth enough to show it; the silk of his clothes was heavy enough to make a woman envy him. He stuffed the cigar into his mouth and took another puff; pulled it out and blew away the smoke. His smile seemed to of grown wider.

I happened to look up the hill, why I don't know, and I saw another Chinaman roundin' the corner at the end of the block. This was no merchant; a lean, lank man in black blouse and breeches, and he had one of them round highbinder hats. He was comin' on the run.

Just then some one whistled in the alley,

two doors below where I was standing. It was not very loud.

The fat Chinaman stopped short. He'd got beyond me now, and I could see his fat back sort of loosen up as if mebbe he wasn't quite so sure of himself and all the world. He looked toward the alley and then he looked back. I saw his face as he got sight of the lean man that was running downhill toward him. The smile was gone; the cigar in his mouth was pointing toward the sidewalk. He turned and started on a funny little trot toward the middle of the street.

Now I've heard witnesses tell about things when they're under oath, and describe every movement that was made right down to a gnat's ear; and either them men lied or I am a poorer hand than they be at seein' what goes on right under my nose. For, a second ago, there had been just these two Chinamen, the fat man and the lean one that was runnin' down the hill; and now, first thing I knew, here was two more. They'd come—I am sure—out of the alley; but that sureness is only because I've figured it out, knowin' there wasn't any other place as good to hide, and rememberin' that whistle which I'd heard. But they'd done it so quick and so quiet that I never did see them until they were clear of the sidewalk, on the cobblestones, and headin' for the fat man.

He turned toward them, then whirled round lookin' up the hill, and then he give a queer little yell like a goat bleatin' and started runnin' like a duck. He took about three of those waddlin' steps and that was all.

The man from up the hill begun shootin'; and the fat Chinaman fell flat on his face. How many shots was fired I don't know; the three of them was at it all at once. I mind seein' 'em runnin' back to the alley and then sort of wakin' up and takin' after 'em.

They streaked it with me following them. Things had happened so quick that I'd not had time to think until now; and besides that I hadn't a gun on me, anyhow. But when they ran I made up my mind to chase them, and I did so, yellin' for the police with all the voice I owned. I dived into the alley where they had disappeared.

I got about four yards before I quit. 'Twas a big goods box that stopped me; I ran fairly into it, and it knocked the breath from me. I stood there for a second or two lookin' and listenin' for some sign of the three murderers. The place was very dark even at this time o' night, and it was as silent as if there wasn't a soul within a hundred miles. Then a door banged some'r's ahead of me, and the stillness came once more. A rat ran across my feet. The stink of dried fish and rotten vegetables was thick as pea soup in the air. I turned around and hurried back to the street.

I stood there with my mouth wide open, and for a minute or so it seemed to me as if I was in the middle of a bad dream. The body had gone.

There was not a sign of it anywheres in sight. And there was not another man besides me in this part of the block. Down on Dupont Street they had heard the shootin' and several people were comin' on a run, but they'd not had time to get more than twenty yards up the hill. The buildings on both sides were all dark, just as they'd been when the thing started. And besides that, I'd gone into that alley on a run; I'd fetched up against that box and stopped for mebbe five seconds; then I'd run out again. And in that time it didn't seem possible that any man could have got to the body and taken it to cover.

Well, I felt mighty strange then, but not half so queer as I did a few minutes later when two policemen come shovin' through the crowd that was gatherin'. One o' them grabbed me by the arm.

"What's this?" he says. "Where was the shootin'?"

"Right here," says I.

"Anybody hurt?" the other policeman asked.

"Man killed," I says. "Anyhow he looked to be killed." And right then I knew I was a fool. For who would believe that a body could get up and walk away?

Them two policemen didn't believe it, ye can lay to that. When I started to explain it, just as I'd seen it happen right before my eyes, they looked at each other like men will who smell something wrong; and then they went right after me roughshod. Ye've heard of the third degree; well that was before it was supposed to be thought of, but I got it out there on the cobblestones with a crowd of Chinamen standin' round and takin' it all in. I showed them officers all over the ground and I told 'em who I was and finally they ended by takin' down my name and address and lettin' me go; but I

knew I'd had a close call from bein' fetched to the city prison on suspicion. For who could believe what I'd seen? I couldn't, myself.

I thought of it for many a day and many a night afterward. 'Twas one of those things that will not leave a man's mind, but are bound to keep botherin' him. The *Susan B.* ran down to Monterey Bay that week with supplies for some abalone divers, and came back again, and I was a busy man; but while I was on deck and while I was in my berth waitin' to go to sleep and while I would be settin' in the cabin, I could see that fat Chinaman stumble and fall on his face; and then—the bare cobblestones where he had been. And the more I would think of it, the harder it was to explain.

We came back to port and we anchored off Meigg's wharf, and I went uptown; the hands had their pay comin' and I was to get the money from Gaspar Littlejohn. 'Twas a bright, sunshiny afternoon, one of them fine days we get in San Francisco between the winter rains, and all of Chinatown seemed to be out on the street; fat women waddlin' along with little kids hangin' to their hands; girls in gaudy silk trousers, with jade ornaments in their hair; flocks of coolies trottin' up and down the sidewalks, each of 'em with two baskets hangin' from the ends of a pole over his shoulder; slick-faced gamblers; opium smokers; tong men with their round black highbinder hats; bent-backed old chestnut peddlers with their little charcoal stoves standin' at the street corners; crowds loafin' in front of the buildin' walls where the red paper bulletins were pasted. 'Twas lively enough on Dupont; but the side street, where Gaspar Littlejohn's office was, showed nobody about; and I hurried to the door. Two Chinamen were standin' in the entrance. I did not see them until I'd reached for the knob; and they was both onto me at once, jabberin' and grabbin' at my coat.

"No can do," says one of them. He was a big-boned fellow, with a queer scar that had clove his chin right in the middle.

"What's the matter with you?" says I, and turned the knob. The door was locked.

"Wha's a' malla you?" says he, and tried to pull me away.

I knocked him against the wall with a back-handed slap, and he looked mighty ugly about it. I don't know what he'd o' done, but Littlejohn's voice come from inside: "Who's there?"

"'Tis me," I sung out. "Anything wrong?"

He said something which I did not get, and a Chinaman spoke up in there, talkin' singsong in his native tongue. The man with the scar on his chin answered, and the other one let go of my collar in time to save himself from being hurt. They both stood back while Gaspar Littlejohn came and unlocked the door. I passed in and he locked it behind me.

"I didn't expect ye, cap'n," he says, "and I've some business with a client here. Come in. Come in. 'Tis all right so long as it's only you. I'll be done inside of a few minutes now."

Well, I'd seen all manner of curious clients of his in that office, and more'n one queer proceedin' goin' on in there, too, so I wasn't much surprised at all this fuss outside, and I wasn't particularly interested in what was comin' off in here either. I found a chair, and I was makin' myself comfortable before I begun to take real notice. It was a dimmish place, that room, with law books all around, and a big desk. Well, the Chinaman who'd sung out to the guards at the door was settin' back there by the desk facin' me and at first I thought the poor light had tricked me; so I stared at him for pretty nigh a minute before I got it through my head.

It was the fat Chinaman that I'd seen shot down in the street that night.

Wasn't a doubt about it. 'Twas him—alive. Not only alive, but smokin' his long, black, fat cigar as comfortable as ye please, and that same smile on his face when he went past me, as if he was satisfied with all the world.

Now, it was only a matter of a week or ten days since I'd watched enough lead goin' into him to kill six Chinamen—or white men either for the matter o' that. If he'd been here, laid out on a bed and wrapped in bandages, I'd o' been struck in a heap by the sight of him alive. But here he sat without a single hole in him, without a single sign of hurt. And—I looked hard and long to make sure, and I rubbed my eyes and blinked until I couldn't doubt it at all—it really *was* him, too. 'Twas more'n I could understand.

Gaspar Littlejohn didn't pay any more attention to me, but hurried back to this

client of his that should by all rights have been dead and buried a full week; and then I saw another queer thing happen.

They'd rigged one o' those big Chinese scales—a balance beam and two iron baskets hangin' from it—to a hook overhead. The fat Chinaman got into one o' the baskets and squatted there, still smokin' his cigar; Gaspar Littlejohn threw open the lid of a big sandalwood chest that was standin' close by and started fillin' the other basket—and the weights that he used was gold coins.

I watched that bald-headed little lawyer handlin' the yellow stuff and every now and then he'd look over his shoulder with his rat eyes glistenin' as if he was afraid of some one gettin' by that guard at the door and breakin' in. But the fat Chinaman didn't seem to be afraid of anything. He was puffin' away very contented on his cigar, with a smile on his face that never changed but once.

That was when they got to the end of the weighin'. Gaspar Littlejohn had laid on the last handful of double eagles; it brought down the basket on that side.

"Enough," says he.

The fat Chinaman looked at the pile for a long time. I could see his lips move as if he was countin' to himself; he looked at the sandalwood chest where there was still more gold, and he hove a big sigh. Then he got off the scales. The two of them stood there talkin' for a minute or so very quiet, and then Littlejohn took the gold from the scales and laid it into another chest. He spoke to the Chinaman again, and they went together to the door. The lawyer opened it, and I saw the two Chinamen who'd been standing guard outside close in, one on either side of the fat man, and start away with him.

"Well, cap'n," says Gaspar Littlejohn, "what manner of a v'y'ge?"

I told him how things had went, and then: "Who is that Chinaman?" says I. 'Twas not my habit to be askin' him questions; I'd 'a' been a very busy man if I'd bothered my head with all the queer things that came up along of my business dealin's with him; but this time it had been too much for me.

"That man," he says, "is Quong Tuck."

Now Quong Tuck was the richest merchant in Chinatown, accordin' to common report, worth a good half a million dollars at the very least, and mebbe twicet that much. And he had been one of the foremost in puttin' a price on the head of Little Pete, the king of the highbinders.

I didn't ask Gaspar Littlejohn any more, for as I've told ye I had better sense than to put too many questions about the things I saw happenin' around me, but I got the money to pay the hands and I went about my business.

Now it is curious, when once ye've seen a man to take notice of him, how ye will run acrost him afterward. Did ye ever think o' that? Ye may have met him a hundred times before, passin' him on the sidewalk, never knowin' him amongst all the others; but once something has happened that makes ye take a good look at him, something that brings his face to your attention, ye won't ever miss it when ye cross his course next time. That's the reason, of course, but the result always does seem queer—as if ye'd never come a-nigh this one partic'lar person until the time when that thing happened, when he walked into your part of the world, ye might say.

So it was with this fat Chinaman, Quong Tuck. I'd heard of him, Lord knows how many times, but I'd never laid eyes on his face that I could remember until the evenin' when I saw him shot down. Durin' the next two weeks I met him twice on the street. He was walkin' down the sidewalk, smokin' the usual big fat cigar, lookin' as if he hadn't a thing to worry about; but there was two Chinamen in front of him and two behind, and amongst them my friend with the clove chin that had grabbed me by the collar in Gaspar Littlejohn's door. So I knew that old Quong Tuck was travelin' with a good-sized bodyguard.

One day, not long afterward, I noticed a crowd in front o' one o' those buildin' walls which are covered with red papers all marked over with Chinese writin'; and it was plain to see that there was somethin' bigger than usual in the bulletins. I got sight of a young China boy that had been steward on the schooner the summer before, a brisk lad that had gone to the public schools and knew English.

"Sam," I says, "what's makin' all the talk?"

He showed me one red paper slip, so bright and clean that I could see it had been pasted there durin' the past twenty-four hours.

"Lot's o' tlouble," says he, "China boy make hip fight mebbe now."

"Well," says I, "I can't read the lingo. What is it, Sam?"

He nudged me to come off to one side where there wouldn't be anybody to overhear, and then he told me. "Litty Pete, he make that paper; all a same leward, you sabe; ten thousan' dolla, anybody kill Quong Tuck."

It was about the galliest move I'd ever heard of, even in a Chinese tong war—to post an offer like that right out on the public street; but Little Pete he wasn't any common Chinaman by a long shot. He'd put over some mighty raw work on white men and gotten away with it; and so far, he'd always managed to come out ahead in every deal he'd started out on among his own people.

"Quong Tuck," says Sam, "he make plomise to China boy hip big money to kill Litty Pete. No can do. Now Litty Pete he pay China boy hip big money to kill Quong Tuck. Mebbe can do. I dunno. I think lo's of tlouble now. Highbinda shoot alla time."

Well, I spoke about it to Gaspar Littlejohn that same evenin', for I had business with him at the office, and I told him about the night when I'd seen Quong Tuck shot down. If he had any answer to the puzzle that had bothered me when I had come back and found the street empty, he didn't let on about it. But when I spoke of Little Pete's offer of ten thousand dollars he shook his bald head.

"Young man," says he, "if the mayor of San Francisco had offered ten thousand dollars to any man that would kill you, and you had to trust your life to men you'd hired to protect you, what chance do you think you'd be runnin'? Hey?"

And I went away from his office wonderin' how old Quong Tuck had managed to hang onto that fat contented smile of his.

The next day the schooner sailed, and we were gone a week, down amongst the Santa Barbara Islands. We got back one fine mornin', and I telephoned up to Gaspar Littlejohn to leave him know we were in port.

"Tell the men to be aboard to-morrow afternoon," he says, "and come up to the office in the mornin' yourself. I want you here on business of my own. We're goin' to Quong Tuck's funeral."

"Quong Tuck!" says I. "His funeral! They killed him, then?"

"No," says Gaspar Littlejohn, "Quong Tuck died peaceful enough in his own bed."

"Died peacefully!" says I. "So, he beat Little Pete to it after all!"

With that I hung up. I couldn't help feelin' that the fat man had put one over on the king o' the highbinders; it seemed to me as if he must be smilin' now in his coffin when he thought of the men who'd been slinkin' after him, stayin' up nights to kill him and of the way they'd be ragin' over the reward they'd missed. I was willin' to bet he'd died—like Gaspar Littlejohn had said—peacefully. 'Twould o' made me feel peaceful, too, if I'd been in his fix.

Well, I was goin' to the funeral—why, I didn't know, but I'd 'a' pretty good idee 'twas to guard Gaspar Littlejohn. Chances was good for trouble at that funeral. Just as well for them that went to have some one around that was handy at lookin' out for 'em. The Chinamen had a way of bustin' out in tong battles whenever there was any manner of festivities in them days. So when the next mornin' come I showed up at Gaspar Littlejohn's office, my good clothes on, and a revolver in my pocket.

As soon as I clapped eyes on the lawyer I knew he was in a blue funk.

"How d'do cap'n," says he, "ye're late. I was beginnin' to think ye weren't comin' at all."

Now, 'twas only ten o'clock, and he'd not named any hour when he telephoned me; and I told him as much, but he didn't seem to even hear me.

"Got to be movin' now," he says. "Got to be movin'. This here is bad business."

"Bad business!" says I. "Well ye can call it that; but I call Quong Tuck a lucky Chinaman; he might o' died with a pound or two o' lead inside of him. Far as I can understand, it seems like he ort to o' died that way. And here he's gone all peaceful and quiet."

"Lord, cap'n," he says, "come on. I can't bear to hear ye talk like that," and started for the door ahead o' me.

He was all decked out in black, with a Prince Albert coat that was what I would call a rotten fit, and a stovepipe hat which made him look shorter than he really was. He pulled it off and wiped his bald head

with a silk handkerchief; big drops o' sweat was standin' on his forehead.

"I'm a little put out this mornin'," he says, "and 'tis rotten weather—sultrylike. Think it's comin' on a storm, cap'n?"

Well, 'twas as sweet a mornin' as ye'd wish to see, with little gusts o' breeze around every street corner, but I didn't contradict him; 'twas hot for him, and that was plain enough for any man to see.

"Where do we head for now?" I asked him.

He stopped in the doorway and put his mouth close to my ear, although there wasn't a soul on this side of the street to hear him.

"Got a little business with the undertaker," he whispered. "There'll be a hack waitin' for us to take us to the funeral."

He made me feel as if I was goin' out grave robbin', and I said no more to him as we went up the street. Chinatown was crowded. Quong Tuck was a big man among his people in the State, and there'd been a many come from other places; besides which, business was closed up all along Dupont Street on account o' the funeral. Every one was out on the sidewalks, and I could see with half an eye that there was trouble in the wind—too many of them round highbinder hats sprinkled in the crowd to suit me. Yet, as we walked along among 'em, there wasn't a single yellow face that showed a sign of feelin', and not one o' them but looked as calm as a ship's figgerhead.

The undertaker's office was on a side street out near the end o' Chinatown, where the Italians begin to show, and there was no one about the place except the undertaker; he was standin' by in the front door, and when we hove in sight he come to meet us. I've seen a many o' them; but this was the first I ever run afoul of that was lookin' miserable—without tryin' to do it—on the mornin' of a big funeral. He shook hands with me when Gaspar Littlejohn introduced us, and 'twas like grabbin' holt of a wet dishrag.

"Here comes the hack, gentlemen," says he. "Now everything's ready." He slipped his arm into the crook of Gaspar Littlejohn's elbow and them two whispered together.

"Cap'n," says the bald-headed man, "wait here for us; we won't be gone a minute."

And they went into the undertakin' rooms. I stood by on the sidewalk passin' the time o' day with the hackman until the two o' them showed up again.

There was an alleyway beside the undertaker's shop; and one o' them long black wagons, that they use to cart dead folks around in, came into it from behind the building. Gaspar Littlejohn and the undertaker hurried out of the front door a second or two later. The both of them dived into the hack and me after them. As the driver was whippin' up I happened to look back down the alley. The black wagon was turnin' the corner into the next street, the horses goin' on a dead jump. A lean, long Chinaman, wearin' one o' them highbinder hats, was runnin' behind. His pigtail was streamin' straight back in the wind. Somehow he had a familiar look.

"And now," says Gaspar Littlejohn, "all we got ahead of us is the funeral."

"I wisht," says the undertaker, "that we was done with it." He rolled his eyes as if he was feelin' mighty bad. But by the time the hack had stopped in front of Quong Tuck's store the both o' them had braced up and was steady enough as fur as any one could see by the looks o' them.

The street was jammed full o' hacks and policemen and Chinamen, and a band o' music all mixed up amongst 'em. We plowed through the mess and climbed the stairs to the second floor where Quong Tuck had lived with his family. He was layin' in state in the front parlor; and this time I hadn't any cause to wonder or to doubt, for the chair they give me was close beside Gaspar Littlejohn's, where both of us could look right at the dead face of him.

'Twas a queer room, like many rich Chinamen had in them days, with a deal o' white man's furniture and gear, and any amount of odds and ends from his native country. Plush-bottom chairs; a parlor organ, with hymn books on it; and hard by a little shrine with a picture of a big mustached Chinaman and joss sticks burnin' before it. The place was full of people, mostly merchants from Dupont Street, with their jade bracelets, their silk blouses, their thick-soled slippers. They looked on like a lot of wooden images—not a sign of a smile or a tear or any other sort of feelin' amongst them.

Seems like that part of it was the business of the hired mourners. There was a bunch of them, on their hands and knees, at one end o' the room, dressed all in white. They

banged their heads upon the floor and yelled, until I thought my ears would crack, until it seemed as if they couldn't keep it up another second. But they'd stay with it for half an hour at a time; and when they'd stop, clean done out and winded, a lean lank Chinese priest at the other end o' the room would start ringin' on a little bell and yowlin' on his own account. He'd spell 'em for a while and then they'd break loose again. Man! 'twas tryin' to the ears.

And all the other Chinamen looked on, makin' no sign that they even knew the dead man. And Gaspar Littlejohn sat beside me wipin' the beads of sweat from his forehead with his big silk handkerchief, starin' at the coffin. He never took his eyes away from it.

It lasted for a long time. And then our friend the undertaker showed his nose from an inside room and the bearers took the coffin, and all of us went downstairs into the street.

"Stick close to me," whispers Gaspar Littlejohn, "and if anything starts that looks like trouble, make for the hearse."

And there was something in the air I could sense—like a man will sense a fall o' the barometer without needin' to look at the glass sometimes—something behind all the yowlin' o' the mourners and the yellin' o' the priest, and all the wooden yellow faces, that made me uneasy. Something was happenin' that I couldn't see or hear, and sooner or later it was goin' to bust loose, too.

Now they were goin' to put the mortal remains of Quong Tuck onto the China steamer which was due to sail the next day, so that he'd be buried, accordin' to the custom of them that have the price, in the land of his grandfathers. And the procession headed straight for the docks.

Gaspar Littlejohn and I rode in one of the foremost hacks. The undertaker had made off, as fur as I could see, and he didn't show up again. On top of the hearse ahead of us the lean priest sat scatterin' little paper prayers about him to keep off the evil spirits. The hired mourners yelled and beat their breasts and tore their hair on both sides. There was a Chinese band which made a powerful lot o' noise—as nigh as I can describe it, the same kind o' music as ye get from a boiler factory. Once in a while it would belay, and then the American band would strike up for a few minutes. It looked like all of San Francisco was on the sidewalks watchin' us, and there was more policemen on the street than I'd ever seen at one time in the city. Gaspar Littlejohn wasn't the only man who was expectin' trouble.

All the time he sat there in the hack with his head poked out of the window, his eyes on the hearse ahead of us.

But we got down to the docks without a thing happenin'; and I stood by with the lawyer while the bearers took the coffin aboard the China boat. We watched 'em march through the crowd on the wharf and over a wide gangplank through the open port; and then they came back empty-handed.

"That's done," says Gaspar Littlejohn, and hove a big sigh like a man who's got a load off of his mind. And as for myself, I was not sorry that we'd got through it without the bustin' out of a tong war. Chinatown was a ticklish place in them days, and Little Pete's hatchet men was always ready for a shootin'. We piled into the hack and it took us back uptown.

Dupont Street was very quiet, hardly a soul about; they were all at the funeral, and we'd got back before the bulk of the crowd had begun to leave the city front. As the hack was turning up the hill I saw a lean, lank Chinaman in black and wearin' a high-binder hat, shoot out from a doorway, and follow in our wake. I wasn't sure, but he did look a deal like that fellow I'd seen hangin' on behind the undertaker's wagon that mornin'. But when the hack stopped to let us out he was not anywhere in sight, and so I said nothing about him to the lawyer.

"Now, cap'n," says Gaspar Littlejohn when we'd got into the office, "can ye run out to set with the evenin' tide, and stand by off Baker's Beach until a boat comes out with further orders for ye?"

"If I don't have to hold her there too long, I can do it," I told him. "I must have them orders by twelve o'clock."

"All right," he says, "we'll do it then, and I'll be along to see that all goes right."

I waited while he did some telephonin' and fixed up some papers on his desk, and then us two started for the dock and the *Susan B.*

As we were leaving the office I got a glimpse of that same lank Chinaman down on the corner of Dupont Street, talkin' to some one in a hack which had drawn up to

the curb. I saw enough to be sure that the other fellow was a man of his own people, and that was all. The lean one looked over his shoulder toward us, then hurried away like a thief and the hack driver whipped up his horses. Gaspar Littlejohn grabbed my elbow.

"I wisht that I was done with this day's work," he says; and I saw his face had turned a sort of greenish gray.

Gaspar Littlejohn had not finished sweatin' when we got aboard the schooner, and while we ate dinner he kept foolin' with the tablecloth and drummin' on his plate with his knife until he nigh drove me crazy. I can stand my share of work or fightin' or that manner of things, but watchin' a nervous man—who won't let ye into the secret of what is keepin' his nerves on aidge—makes me about as savage as anything I know.

But at last the tide was runnin' out, and we weighed anchor and dropped down through the Golden Gate, with just enough air to keep her under good headway. The dark began to come; the lights o' the city was showin', a big glow over the hills which hid the downtown from us; and nearer, where the streets ran out into the west, a lot of scattered points, all bright against the blackness of the hidden land. We slipped through the narrows and brought the *Susan B.* this side of Mile Rock, until we was within a few hundred yards of shore and had good holdin' ground. Wind and tide was both sweepin' seaward, and there was no need to worry about her position for a few hours.

'Twas good and dark now, and I walked the deck with Gaspar Littlejohn beside me. Every five minutes or so he'd pull out his watch and look at it by the light o' the binnacle lamp, and between times he'd make little runs to the rail; or he'd stop talkin' and grab my arm, sayin' "Hark!" But there was no sound of oars, nor was there any other sign of a boat; and finally it had gone past eleven o'clock.

"See here," says I, "looks to me like something has gone wrong with that there boat of yours and, right or wrong, there's one thing dead certain, I can't keep this schooner here after the tide turns. We have got to clear out within an hour."

It seemed to me as if I heard him groan, but I couldn't be sure of that. I'd of liked it a deal better if he'd o' told me just exactly what was in the wind and who it was that we was waitin' to get our word from, so that, if it come to any kind of a pinch, I'd know what manner of a course to shape. But he was the owner—or anyhow he represented the owners, which comes to the same thing—and he had the right to keep me on sealed orders even if he wrecked the schooner by doin' it.

He stood there with his head bowed for a minute as if he was tryin' to make up his mind to somethin' which he didn't like, and then: "Cap'n," says he, "we'll have to go ashore ourselves. There's no other way."

"All right," says I, "and called the hands to man a boat. I had two old whaler's boat steerers at the oars for I'd an idee there was trouble comin' and I wanted men with me who could use their fists—or swing clubs in a pinch. I helped Gaspar Littlejohn to get in without capsizin' the dory or goin' overboard—both of which things he did seem dead set on doin'. Then I told the men to give way and keep as quiet as they could about it.

There was some surf on the beach and we got a bit wet in makin' land, but nothin' to hurt anybody. I give the men orders to stand by unless I called them, and if I done that to head for the sound as fast as they could heel it. Then Gaspar Littlejohn and I started down the beach.

Now Baker's Beach is not so much, but it's long enough on a dark night, and I asked the lawyer if he'd any idee what part of the place the boat was due to come from; but of course he hadn't, so I saw we had to look it over from end to end.

We'd landed toward the seaward end and we was walkin' back in the direction of Fort Point. The beach is narrow and it backs against steep cliffs. These shaded us from what little light there might be at this time o' night, shuttin' out more'n half the stars; and 'twas like walkin' in a cellar here. To make it worse, the lawyer hung onto my arm, and I could hear his teeth rattlin' in his head.

A minute later, "There," whispered Gaspar Littlejohn.

He'd seen it first, and he was right. There was a boat, painted white so that we could see the glow of it faintlike through the dark, and 'twas pulled up pretty well on the beach. I made for it, but just as I got nigh to it I fell flat. I had stumbled on something soft.

I picked myself up with a wet smear on

my face, and I knew what that smear had come from, for while I was gettin' my legs in under me I'd a close look at the thing which had tripped me; and 'twas a dead Chinaman. Some one had knocked the back of his head in with a lather's hatchet, and they must of run away mighty fast, for they'd left the hatchet behind them. It was a nasty sight; but the thing that set me to thinkin' was the face. I couldn' mistake that clove chin anywheres; it was the man that had been guarding Gaspar Littlejohn's door that day when he was weighing Quong Tuck.

Well, I was on my feet at once and lookin' for trouble, but the blackness around me didn't give a sign of any livin' bein', only the lawyer; I could hear him breathin' thick and hard, like a man asleep. We stood there for a few seconds—waitin'; and then there came a sound from the direction of the cliff.

Some one was movin' there, and movin' as quiet as he could, too. I'd hear a rattle of dirt and little stones where his foot had stirred 'em; then everything would be still again; and pretty soon there'd come another.

Then I cursed Gaspar Littlejohn to myself, givin' him every name that I could lay my tongue to, for that damned cautiousness of his that had made him keep things from me. For how was I to know who this party was over there among the rocks? Whether he was a friend or some one that we must fight? And how was I to know what he was up to? I could only stand by and listen, feelin' like a fool.

Thank the Lord, it didn't last long, or I'd o' had to let off steam somehow. Waitin' on a dark beach for ye don't know what, with a murdered man at your feet and your ship only a few hundred yards offshore with the turn of the tide about to come, is not one o' them things that suits my fancy.

There was a louder slide of stones. "What's that?" says Gaspar Littlejohn.

"Shut up!" says I; and then —

Some one came runnin' from the cliff toward us.

First, 'twas just one pair of feet drummin' on the hard sand, and judgin' by the sound that man was racin' for his life. But directly I'd heard it, here came more footbeats. The first man had started from the bottom of the cliff, as nigh as I can judge, straight toward the water. The others came from three or four different directions. For a minute it seemed as if the darkness back there in the shadow of the cliff was plumb filled up with people, but not one of 'em said a word or made a call.

Then the shape of a man came bustin' out of the night, all dim and uncertain, but streakin' straight toward us. I'd barely caught sight of it before another shot into sight, like a bat out of hell, right after him. And at the very moment when I was settin' myself to grab the first one—he'd got that clost to me—a third man seemed to rise right out of the sand beside me. I believe he'd been lyin' there all along in ambush. He made a plunge at the first man, who changed his course straight up the beach in the direction of our dory.

But he'd not gone twenty steps before he'd doubled on his tracks and here he came, streakin' it straight past me. I could hear the breathin' of the others off in the dark, and the pat-pattin' of their feet on the wet sand.

"Oh, save him, cap'n!" yelled Gaspar Littlejohn.

Well, that was some comfort, to know what side I was fightin' on; and just then I saw one of the men who was after him comin' clost by. I reached out my foot and tripped him. He rolled over and over, and splashed in the wash a dozen feet away. By now I'd seen enough to know that the whole gang were Chinamen.

The rest o' them had got out o' sight, and I was about to run after 'em, when here came the beat of their feet back up the beach again. I settled myself to get into the action this time.

Our man was still holdin' a good lead, for I heard the whistle of his breath long before I got theirs. But for the life of me I couldn't make out just where he was. I bent forward strainin' my eyes and ears searchin' for the first sign of him. And before I got it, he was past me.

"Now," says I, "after him." And I put on all steam. All I wanted was to catch him and get holt of him, and then stand off the others. But wantin' it was easier than the doin'. I was fresh and he was winded, but he was runnin' like a scared rabbit, and gainin' every step. Some'ers nigh I could hear Gaspar Littlejohn stumblin' and chokin' as he tried to keep up with me. Back of us I could hear the others; and off to one side there was one more who seemed

to be cuttin' in toward the fleein' man at an angle.

I thought of the boat steerers; we were headin' straight toward 'em. I sung out with all the voice I owned. "Catch him!" I yelled. "Don't leave him get by ye!"

And with that, as if he'd been shot, the man tripped and fell. He was a good twenty feet ahead of me; but it come so sudden, and I was under so much headway, that I fairly piled on top of him. We rolled together in the sand.

Some one fired a pistol; I saw the flash of it while I was still on all fours, and the bullet buzzed clost by me. I pulled my own revolver, and before I'd fairly got it out the air was full of Chinamen. There was at least six of 'em, and mebbe more, I can't say as to that—things was too mixed up for a man to do any countin', and there was too much to do in the way of fightin'. I made shift to get to my feet with two of 'em hangin' onto me. Another fired a shot right past my face; the muzzle of his revolver was so clost that the flash burned my cheek and blinded me. I felt the long finger nails of one cuttin' into my neck. I kicked out with both feet into the body of another who was hangin' to my knees; the one who had my throat I gripped around the waist and flung him from me. I could hear the crack of his bones as he struck the sand.

The two boat steerers piled into the fight at about that time. They was pickin' no favorites, and they'd each an oar. I heard Gaspar Littlejohn yell to 'em in time to save our Chinaman from bein' brained.

"Come on!" I sung out; "make for that boat and shove off."

We closed in around the lawyer and the Chinaman, and we fought our way to the dory. 'Twas only the fear that the Chinese have of shootin' a white man that saved our necks then, for we made a good mark all bunched together; but they daresn't take a chance at this man they wanted, with us all around him, and they had to make a stand-up-and-knock-down affair of it, which give us all the advantage, of course. Though, I'll say this much for 'em; they did stick to it like a bunch of bulldogs. Once I had three of 'em on my shoulders, and once I kicked my feet clear of two that was tryin' to dive in under me, and the others of our crowd was kept as busy as me. The air was full of grunts and the plunk of fists, with every now and then the crack of an oar comin' down on a head; and at last we was wadin' waist deep in water, with Gaspar Littlejohn and his precious Chinaman in the dory and the rest of us shovin' off.

'Twas then I got this scar. The gang of 'em had hung back for a second or two when we made the dory, and now they all come pilin' down as we began to get her into the surf, which had picked up and was fairly high by this time. Launchin' a small boat in the breakers by daylight is one o' them things that sort o' holds your attention, but when it's dark and ye're all mixed up with Chinamen clingin' to your legs and climbin' on your shoulders and blazin' away around ye with revolvers—for they'd got desperate now, and they was shootin', white men or no white men—why, it's no joke.

However, we beat 'em off and we got the dory out, and I was climbin' in, last man, over the stern, when one of the gang grabbed me round the neck and tried to force my head under water. I had to drop the boat and use both hands to tear him loose; and then, just as I got free from him, he sunk his teeth into my arm. I pulled my revolver with the other hand from my waistband where I'd tucked it, and I struck down a good hefty blow that ought to o' killed any man. The dory was gettin' away; I made a jump and grabbed the stern again, with him still hangin' to my arm. I pulled myself in with one hand and him along with me, and then, while the boat rose climbin' the first breaker, I shook him loose at last. He clumped down in a heap, quite dead, and I made shift to heave him overboard before we'd climbed the next breaker. I got a look at him: 'twas the lean Chinaman I'd seen that mornin' runnin' behind the undertaker's wagon.

Well, we got alongside the schooner without any more trouble, and we climbed aboard. There was some delay gettin' Gaspar Littlejohn and his Chinaman over the side, for the sea was runnin' fairly high, and we was that busy at it that we never heard the sound of oars. The first we knew of another boat was when it showed alongside, and a big burly Chinaman made one leap onto our deck. Gaspar Littlejohn was headin' for the cabin companion with our Chinaman. The fellow that had boarded us fired three shots before his feet had more than struck the deck. I knocked him overboard as he was pullin' the trigger the last time, and whether his companions rescued

him or not, I don't know. They sheered off and vanished into the night, and 'twas the last we saw of any of 'em.

I wasted no time watchin' 'em, though; I'd seen our Chinaman fall at the first shot, and I made a run for him. Before I reached him he was on his feet. And I got sight of his face in the light of the cabin companion. He was smilin' like a man who is well pleased with himself. I'd o' known him by that smile alone. It was Quong Tuck!

Well, there was no time to bother with my curiosity now; we had to get under way, and I was busy on deck for half an hour or so before I went below. I found Gaspar Littlejohn and Quong Tuck and the steward rubbin' some bruises on Quong Tuck's body.

The fat Chinaman was lookin' like a man that never had a trouble. He'd evidently made up his mind that his dangers was past now, for he'd taken off a shirt of linked steel that he'd been wearin' under that purple blouse of his, and he'd laid it on the table. I hefted it; it must o' been infernal uncomfortable, for it weighed a good fifteen pounds.

"What orders now?" says I to Gaspar Littlejohn.

"Cross the bar and anchor this side o' the lightship," says he, "until the *Empress* shows up in the mornin'."

And when she showed up, with the ebb tide next day, we ran toward her, and saw her heave to, to drop her pilot. The yawl was comin' from the pilot boat. We launched our dory, and the two boat steerers manned her. Quong Tuck scrambled over the rail, and Gaspar Littlejohn with him. Whether they'd made arrangements with the steamship people I don't know, but the lawyer give the ship a hail, and she waited until the fat Chinaman had jumped from the dory and was climbin' the Jacob's ladder up her side. I saw the propeller churn the water; the steamship moved away, and the last sight I got of Quong Tuck he was standin' on her deck lookin' back at us. He never even waved.

"Well, cap'n," says Gaspar Littlejohn when he'd got back aboard, "I'm done with that job, thank goodness." Like Quong Tuck, he seemed mighty well pleased with himself. I suppose he'd made a fat fee out of it.

"Why the funeral?" says I, "when ye could of smuggled him offshore anyhow?"

"Quong Tuck had to take some of his money along with him to China," says Gaspar Littlejohn. "Later on he can send for the rest, when it's safe for him to do so. But to get him away with a decent amount was the main trouble. Ye see Little Pete has a deal o' power, and many men will tell all they know for a price; so we daresn't try bills of exchange or the like; nor a gold shipment. Besides that we had to make believe that Quong Tuck died; for Little Pete's men was shadowin' him. After they'd failed to kill him that first time because he wore a mail shirt, they'd be sure to aim at his head next time—'twas only the hurry he was in that made this fellow follow the highbinder custom of shootin' at the small o' the back last night. No, I saw that he had to make believe to die and then come the idee of puttin' his weight in gold pieces into the coffin."

"Was that weighin' your idee then?" I asked.

" 'Twas his," says Gaspar Littlejohn, "but the wax model of his head was mine, so that everybody would see his face when he laid in state. Pretty, wasn't it? And a fine likeness! That throwed 'em off their guard and held 'em at the funeral while he was on his way to Baker's Beach——"

"In a dead wagon," I says, "and that lean Chinaman that I killed last night followin' behind. I saw him. If ye'd only not been so close-mouthed and had let me know what was in the wind, I could of saved ye a deal o' trouble right then. For 'twas that lean man that trailed Quong Tuck and came back to let the others know where he was hidin', and ye can lay to that. He must of had a lovely game of hide and seek out there while he was waitin' for us to show up!"

Those of our readers who enjoyed "The Man From Bitter Roots," by CAROLINE LOCKHART, will be glad to hear of the author's new novel, "The Wolf Pack," which opens in the next POPULAR, on sale February 7th. It is a wonderful story of the real West. Do not miss it.

The Oro Stage

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

AROUND the bend we streaked it with the leaders swingin' wide,
Down the mountain from the old El Oro Mines;
Jim Waring he was ridin' gun—a sawed-off at his side;
And the sun was settin' level through the pines;
We was late—and come a-reelin'
With the gritty brakes a-squealin'
And the slack a-dancin' lively down the lines.

Jim Waring he said nothin' for he weren't the talkin' kind;
For he did his argumentin' with a gun;
But I seen as plain as daylight he had somethin' on his mind,
'Cause he kep' a-glancin' sideways at the sun;
We was late—and come a-glidin'
With the smokin' wheels a-slidin'
So I shot the popper to 'em on the run.

Them broncs was doin' noble—layin' clost and reachin' far,
With the chains a-snappin' taut and swingin' free;
I could see the Notch a-loomin', but acrost the evenin' star
Was a shadder where no shadder ought to be;
We was runnin' and a-reekin'
With the Concord springs a-squeakin'
When Jim Waring touched me gentle, with his knee.

Oh, I knowed just what was comin'! We was packin' Oro dust—
And Jim Waring never knew what quittin' meant;
We was bustin' on a holdup—it was Salvador or bust—
And our chance of winnin' worth about a cent.
Now I weren't no outlaw stopper,
But I sure could shoot the popper,
So I hollered to the broncs—and in we went.

If the game was worth the glory then we ought to had a crown,
For we sure was biddin' high for all we got;
I was tendin' to the hosses, but I seen Jim's gun come down,
And I smelt the powder smoke a-blowin' hot,
As we took the Notch a-flyin',
With the pinto wheeler dyin',
And Jim doin' business every time he shot.

We made it! And the wind was swift and cool agin' my face,
But the scare was playin' checkers with my brains;
And the pinto bronc was weavin' and a-jerkin' on the trace,
When San Salvador loomed up acrost the plains;
And we hit the town a-reelin',
With the gritty brakes a-squealin',
And the pinto wheeler draggin' in the chains.

The Lost Cache

By Arthur James Hayes

Those who like a good dog story—and from letters received by us, we judge that many of our readers answer to that call—will find in this tale ample food to their taste

AT the summit of the ridge the Cree half-breed shifted the canoe from his shoulders and set it down beside the trail. Behind him the white man cast off his pack with a sigh of relief and squatted upon a moss hummock. The guide unlimbered the hatchet at his belt and began to trim spruce saplings.

"Camp here?" queried Howard McNiven.

The guide nodded, jerking his thumb back over his shoulder in a quick gesture of direction. The white man stared into the west. Great banks of black clouds were rising toward the zenith of the coppery sky, emitting frequent flashes of lightning that briefly silvered the countless miles of spiked spruce tops in the valley.

"Wet lak hell!" he grunted.

"Guess we're in for it," McNiven acquiesced. He stirred gingerly, grimacing as his trail-tortured muscles resented the activity. The half-breed had deftly constructed the skeleton of a lean-to and was slashing down more saplings. The white man's face mirrored his dissatisfaction.

"Chet Miles says there's an old cabin down on the Crazy Owl," he suggested. "We stand a damn' sight better chance of keeping dry there if we mush on."

The other man shrugged his shoulders. "No good," he declared. "Camp here. Plentee a'right."

McNiven rolled a cigarette. "You're not afraid, are you?" he queried casually, staring down at the tobacco. "The fact that they found a couple of men dead down there years ago, isn't much of an argument against using it again. Miles says the roof and walls are good and that there's a first-rate stove in the shack, too. Seems a good place to hang out," he concluded wistfully.

The half-breed rolled up his right shirt sleeve slowly. Then he extended his muscular forearm that the other might gaze. It was heavily scarred in long parallel ridges, which made livid welts across the brown skin.

"Long tam back gettum," he explained. "Go cabin. Black lak hell. No see. Plentee bad medicine!"

He strode away again and resumed work on the lean-to. McNiven stared after him with puzzled eyes.

"What happened to you?" he asked.

The half-breed shrugged his shoulders. "Black lak hell," he grunted.

The young white man hitched his rifle over his shoulder. He was weary of the enigma. "Tell you what, Jack," he suggested tactfully, "I think it would be good sport just to run down there and look it over. I'll take my blankets with me and some coffee and chuck. You can use the poncho here. I'll be back early to-morrow to help portage the canoe and grub."

The guide offered no criticism or objection. Indeed, he seemed not to have heard at all. As McNiven swung away down the narrow and almost obliterated trail he heard the other's hatchet strokes ringing out sharply. "Jack the Moose" was going ahead with the lean-to.

Inclining sharply northward, the old portage followed the sinuous twistings of Yellow Bear Ridge. On the right, the amber waters of Crazy Owl Creek roared and foamed in a series of little cataracts as the stream raced down the valley. Rumor had long linked the Crazy Owl with mysterious el dorados, but there was no authentic record of any free-milling discoveries anywhere along its twisted course.

Westward, in the Chinikuk Hills it cut through some rotten quartz ledges, and veteran prospectors argued that somewhere farther along, its slackening current would drop the flattened nuggets of free-milled gold. Despite the stubborn survival of this tradition, however, repeated panning had failed to reveal any encouraging trace of "color."

Where the ridge thrust a sharp granite elbow out into the little valley, McNiven stopped and stared down into the clearing.

Back of the deserted cabin the forest wall was as black and unbroken as if never touched by the hands of man. Weeds and tall grass and brief-blooming Alaskan wild flowers choked the old path from the cabin door to the spring, and almost obscured the rickety fence that the old homesteader had erected around his tiny garden plot.

It was sufficiently lonely and forsaken to justify the eerie legends that had been woven about "Ghost Cabin." Back in Walking Turtle the stories had seemed silly enough, but here in the wilderness, with dusk dimming the silhouette of the treetops and darkening the ripples on Crazy Owl, they seemed a lot more plausible.

Of actual facts there were few enough. "Boston" McRae, accredited with having made the only real "strike" on Crazy Owl, had been found dead there. At least the discoverers of the body had assumed that it was McRae. The familiar red Mackinaw and mink parka had been ripped to shreds, and the cabin bore evidences of a mighty struggle.

His boots—retaining, no doubt, the flavor of the Kenawha salt marshes—had been nibbled by porcupines, and some questing wolf pack, reckless from starvation, had probably dared the menace of the man smell long enough to pick the bones. His sleigh—empty and despoiled of its rawhide thongs by forest creatures—and the rusted mechanism of a rifle discovered beneath the skeleton, had completed the identification.

Al Parres, apparently, had been the last man to see him alive. He had encountered the old sour dough thirty miles above Crazy Owl Fork, and swore that he then had five dogs in good condition. McRae exhibited four moosehide sacks of dust which he declared to be worth eighty thousand dollars. The gold was in the form of water-worn nuggets, and so pale as to suggest an admixture of silver or platinum.

Two days later a snowslide choked the Crazy Owl trail. Winter traffic switched to the west fork, and the cabin had no other visitors. A government-survey crew working out rail-extension grades into Wolverine, the next spring, found the body. There was no trace of the gold. How McRae had come to his end was a mystery. Neither the skull nor other parts of the skeleton furnished any evidence to suggest a bullet as the cause of his demise. If Parres had been accurate in his observations, the old prospector was well supplied with food.

Even without this, it was unlikely that McRae could have starved. He knew all the yarding places of deer and moose for miles around Moosehead Cabin. Crazy Owl was a famous winter rendezvous of herds of great black Alaskan moose. Indeed, over the old bunk still hung the great stuffed moose head that had given the cabin and locality their names.

"Lutefisk" Larsen, the original builder, had boasted considerable skill as a taxidermist. To while away the monotonous winter months he carefully cured and mounted the head of a mammoth bull he had brought down in Sunrise Swamp. Affixed to a great slab of red cedar, it stared stonily with gleaming fluorspar eyes at all who entered.

McNiven meditated these things as he swished through the tall grass, flailing about his head with a hazel branch to keep off the myriad mosquitoes. It had grown dark rapidly, and as he thrust the creaking door open the first big drops began to echo ominously upon the roof.

The interior had the characteristic odor of rotting wood, stale ashes and musty hay, that ensues from long desertion. The flare of the match revealed a dilapidated bunk, a broken window and a big rusty stove. Across from him the huge moose head sagged downward, as if weary of its silent vigil. The eyes, ingeniously wrought of mineral-spar fragments, gleamed in the yellow light.

The young engineer lit a thick candle and fastened it to the rough table in its own grease. He stuck a second one on the little lamp stand near the door and began to grope in his pack sack, whistling softly the while.

Lightning crackled furiously in the spruce tops and the downpour seemed to increase in violence. The wind rose to shrieking intensity, roaring loudly in the forest fringe and hurling gusts of rain through the broken diamond-paned window. McNiven extracted a small square of canvas from the pack sack and prepared to hang it over the aperture.

Jack the Moose, having breakfasted alone, was weary of waiting. Cupping his hands about his mouth he sent another long "coo-hee" echoing over the valley. There was no response. He thrust the canoe into

the shaded area to protect the pitch seams from the sun, slung his pack across his shoulders and strode off down the trail.

At the edge of the clearing he paused in wonderment. No smoke rose from the rusted stovepipe. A few chickadees fluttered about the doorway, and a jay screeched raucously from a stunted cedar. Elsewhere was a dense silence, a sort of expectant stillness, as if the very wilderness awaited a dénouement.

There was no change of expression upon the guide's leathery face, but he walked more rapidly, throwing his rifle into the crook of his arm. The cabin door was closed, but from within was audible the buzzing of swarms of black flies.

Swollen with moisture, the door resisted sullenly, then groaned in surrender as the big woodsman hurled his bulk against it. Jack the Moose had been raised in the mission school at Minemoka, and at the sight revealed he crossed himself and muttered the name of the Virgin. Swarms of flies rose scurrying into the air, interrupted at their gruesome feast.

McNiven was sprawled out upon the floor with his throat slashed wide open and his right hand almost severed at the wrist. There was a long gash under one eye, reaching almost to the chin, and his khaki shirt was ripped to shreds. Blood was smeared upon the floor and spattered upon the walls and bunk. Queer, shapeless smudges of it described a line to the unglassed window. His big blue automatic, half loosed from the holster, gleamed in a ray of sunlight. His rifle, still slung upon his shoulder, was covered with clotted blood and the grime of the cabin floor.

The two candles had burned down and guttered out in their own blackened grease pools. The pack sack had not been tampered with, save that the half-breed recognized the bloodstained tarpaulin, crumpled up beneath the window, as the dead man's property. A board creaked beneath his feet and he spun around with a startled oath.

The open door revealed no stealthy assailant. It afforded, in fact, only a vista of weed-grown clearing, with its gray-green frame of budding spruce trees. Gingerly, with true Cree fear of the dead, Jack the Moose felt one of the sprawling limbs. It was rigid. It seemed that McNiven had been attacked even before he had begun preparations for installing himself for the night.

Search outside the cabin failed to reveal any trace of McNiven's assailant. The rain had obliterated any marks of blood, and the thrust of the wind had bent the sodden grass in numerous uncut windrows. It was impossible to determine what depressions in the hay and weeds was caused by the tread of the escaping murderer and what had been created by the mere vagaries of wind and rain.

The guide spread the tarpaulin over the body, weighting the edges down with rocks as a temporary protection against marauding beasts. Then he struck the back trail.

Where the first bend screened the cabin from view he stopped, listening intently. Then with infinite stealth he commenced a long detour. At intervals of a few minutes he would pause, throw himself prone upon the moss, and peer cautiously about him. Once or twice he even doubled back on his own trail a hundred yards or more and lay waiting.

Satisfied that he was not being followed, the half-breed resumed his progress. It brought him at last to the fringe of the clearing. A slight rise of ground afforded him an excellent view of the death cabin. Birds flitted around the clearing. The tar-paper roof that had been black with moisture dried out to its usual rusty brown tint. Squirrels consumed with indignant curiosity chattered from near-by refuges. The clear Alaskan sunlight revealed no stealthy nocturnal murderer lured by a guilty conscience back to the scene of his crime.

At midnight of the same day Jack the Moose roused out Bob Ellison, United States marshal for the Chinikuk district. An hour later a posse was on its way to Crazy Owl. The uncanny nature of the affair sent almost as many curious men over the ancient trail as if it had been whispered that Crazy Owl had at last yielded pay dirt.

Ellison found some of the rocks rolled off the tarpaulin and the canvas itself half removed from the body. Other than that, however, there was no evidence of nocturnal activity in the cabin. The dead man's money belt and contents had been left intact and his pockets were not rifled.

Concerning the nature of the wounds inflicted, there was a wide diversity of opinion.

"A crazy man with a spike or a blunt

knife," declared Bert Fisher, "could have hacked him up that way. It's not an ordinary knifing job because the cuts are too ragged."

"Queer he didn't use a gun, with two of 'em handy," mused Olaf Evenson. "It's mighty funny that during all that strugglin' he didn't draw."

"A couple of lynx, now," suggested a weather-beaten old trapper, "if they had kittens hid around under the shack, could hev done fer him that way. If them damn cats go fer a man at all, they do it up good an' plenty. I rec'lect when we found Red Bill Shea up on the Kegewik. Seems like he put up in an ol' camp where a brood of lynx kittens was hangin' out. The ol' pair just chawed 'im to tatters."

The lynx theory proved untenable. Careful search of the cabin failed to reveal any evidence of young animals. Portions of the floor were ripped up unavailingly. An impromptu coroner's jury returned a verdict of "death from cause or causes unknown," and because it was mid-July the young government engineer was buried back in Walking Turtle. Customary calm descended upon the Crazy Owl wilderness, and save for an occasional whispered surmise that Jack the Moose might know more about the affair than he told, the incident lapsed into the past.

At least two persons in camp, however, found their thoughts haunted by the memory of that stark figure sprawled out on the bloody floor of Ghost Cabin. One of them was Al Parres, now proprietor of the Paradise Lodge dance hall. The other was Arnold Lennon, government engineer, and boon companion of the slain man.

Parres had been among the first to arrive upon the scene after Sheriff Ellison himself. He assisted in searching the cabin and beating the surrounding forest area for trails. Back in Paradise Lodge he summoned old Buck Gonyeaux to consultation.

"Remember when they found McRae up there on Crazy Owl?" he asked.

The wizened little Frenchman nodded vigorously. "Sure t'ang," he responded. "McRae, she was sure chew up lak hal, eh?"

"Do you remember the skull—the head?" persisted Parres.

"Sacredam! Ees shine lak these silvaire, eh? Weeth zee hair, he's gone, oui! Mebbeso, McRae, don' be eat by wolf, eh? Mebbeso——"

"The teeth," snapped Parres incisively. "Do you remember if there were any gold ones? I don't give two whoops about the hair!"

The little trapper pondered at length. "Dose teet', she ain't none gol'," he finally asserted. "Two—t'ree, mebbeso, she's break off short. Oui, in zee fron', t'ree, she's gone!"

"All right," said Parres casually. "Go out and tell Dave I said you could have a pint of redeyé. I just asked because I heard gold teeth were bad luck. And McRae was sure unlucky!"

After the old trapper had pattered out Parres stared at the lithographed calendar on the farther wall. "Three teeth gone, eh?" he muttered aloud, after a habit of men much alone. "Well, I guess I could tell a few of the boys just where he lost 'em, too!"

Receipts were falling off in the Paradise Lodge. Walking Turtle's boom was on the wane. Even the good claims were pinching out and the others, of whom their owners had entertained great expectations, were established failures. One by one the experienced sour doughs and crass chechahcos who had poured in when rumors of the big strike went forth, began to assemble their belongings and hit the trail.

The proprietor of Paradise Lodge spent more and more time in his little office. He drew map after map of the Crazy Owl Valley, annotating each with mysterious crosses, triangles and dotted lines. These he studied at length, then carefully destroyed. One morning the early-rising patrons of the place remarked his absence. He had donned his corduroy trail togs and struck out for Ghost Cabin.

His scrutiny of the deserted shack, upon arrival, was most remarkably casual. It presented the scene of chaos that had been left by the sheriff's posse. Boards torn up in that hurried search for lynxes still lay in disorder about the floor. Dust was thick over everything. It covered the battered table and bloodstained floor with a gleaming gray mantle and almost obscured the natural hue of the aged and battered moose head. Desolation was written large over the scene, augmenting the weirdness of its strange associations.

After a brief inspection of the room he continued on up the trail. This wound, for the most part, along the very banks of the stream. Here and there a rocky knob projecting high above the moss carpet made a detour farther inland necessary. Before continuing past any one of these outcropping ledges, Parres would subject it to careful inspection.

Mounting upon it he would lie prone on the summit and carefully sight his rifle up and down the trail. Apparently he had no definite target for he never fired. After repeating the process two or three times he would shoulder the weapon and go on.

Once a partridge, bursting cover at his feet, elicited a startled outcry and set him to trembling violently for several minutes. Then the afternoon shadows, lengthening in long purple bars across the trail, warned him of the imminence of sunset. He improvised a little lean-to and prepared a bed of evergreens. After a fireless supper he sat in the shadows smoking and drawing one of the strange maps on a piece of birch bark.

The moon lifted radiantly, silvering the peaks of the spruce trees and casting the farther valley into deep purple shadows. Parres inspected his revolver carefully, thrust it into his open jacket and started back down the trail.

As the edge of the clearing he paused for some minutes in the shadows of the last fringe of trees. After a brief wait his caution was rewarded. A light flashed in Ghost Cabin and was as abruptly extinguished. It was unlike an ordinary match or lantern glow, having a hard blue-white quality. With a muttered exclamation of astonishment, Parres dropped upon his knees and began stealthily to creep through the wild hay of the old garden.

The extreme suddenness with which the light had come and gone was distinctly puzzling. Slowly, with infinite care not to break any of the dry sticks he occasionally encountered in the weeds, he crept forward. Frequently he paused to listen. Strange thudding or rapping sounds were audible from within the shack.

When only a few feet intervened between him and the door he became aware of a sustained grinding noise, as if some one were boring into the wall with an augur. He listened intently.

There was a momentary pause, a scratching noise, and the regular crunching sound was resumed. Parres rose quickly, flattened himself against the cabin wall and crept to the door. The next instant the flare of his electric flash light was boring through the gloom.

"Stick 'em up!" he commanded crisply. His revolver swept back and forth in a short arc, covering every inch of the interior. There was no reply, no heeding of the injunction. The light sought out the dimmest corners, bringing every object in the place into clear relief.

The crunching sound had ceased. Parres thought he was conscious of a sharp acrid odor in the air. Something stirred in the shadows, causing him to start nervously.

The next instant the boring noise was explained. Crouched low on the neck of the mounted moose head was a young porcupine. It had been gnawing the great palmated antlers. Frightened by the light, it began its clumsy descent to the floor. With a disgusted oath the ghost seeker snapped off his light and strode boldly across the clearing in the direction of his lean-to.

Back in his camp he sat motionless for an hour pondering the strange phenomenon of the light. "Might have been peat gas," he muttered finally, "but what the devil touched it off?"

"It's a fool's errand, lad," objected bluff old "Dad" Bennington. "I've never heard of any good comin' out of the Crazy Owl Valley, let alone the Ghost Cabin country."

Arnold Lennon grinned broadly. "You don't believe in banshees, do you, Dad?" he queried.

"It 'u'd be a good place for a banshee to howl, at that," argued the old prospector stoutly. "McRae and McNiven never left the cabin alive, once the door had closed behind 'em. Jack the Moose hasn't brains enough to invent the story he told. And he had his arm and shoulder to show for it, too."

The young engineer had ceased to be amused. "Didn't it make any kind of a noise?" he asked with obvious interest. "I can't understand a hand-to-hand struggle that wouldn't give a man some line on his assailant regardless of how dark it was!"

Bennington shrugged his shoulders. "She goes as she lies," he responded succinctly. "McNiven and McRae never came back to tell about it. Jack the Moose doesn't know."

"Well," persisted Lennon, warming to his favorite theme, "this much is certain: Whatever creature tackled McNiven there in the death shack had intelligence enough to know guns. No doubt Mac reached for his pistol. The tendons of his wrist were sheared off as neatly as if cut with a cleaver. The silence and loneliness drives many a man insane in these parts. There's nothing to prevent one of them turning loose with a rusty hatchet for instance, and raising all kinds of Cain before he cashes in."

"A grizzly or big cinnamon might have turned the trick for that matter," remarked the old sour dough.

"Whatever the agency at work in the Crazy Owl," continued Lennon, "it returns at intervals to the cabin. In view of the fact that there have been queer happenings there for four or five years running, it would seem that it wasn't a lunatic. They don't last that long in this climate. The other kind—the periodical mania type—could still be reckoned in, of course.

"My uncle shipped on a whaler, one time, that was notorious for the men who died mysteriously at the wheel. It seems the first mate had a crazy obsession for striking them down when he saw their heads in the glow of the binnacle light. That's the kind of mania I have in mind. But the best bet of all, however, is that some perfectly sane individual with a lot of crafty cunning, has good reasons for not wanting the Crazy Owl country to get too popular!"

"All of which may be perfectly true," rejoined Bennington dryly, "seeing as it includes about everything under the sun. What are you goin' to do about it?"

Lennon flushed at his patent skepticism. "Just this," he snapped. "I'm going to get a good look at whatever creature has been croaking off chance visitors to the mystery cabin. And once that has been accomplished, if the thing walks on two legs I'm going to force an explanation of its actions." He shouldered his pack and picked up his rifle.

"So long," he remarked casually. "See you in a week or two."

"S'long," rejoined Dad. "I'll be notifying your folks about that time, I s'pose." He grinned broadly, but in his Celtic blue eyes there were worried shadows. Lennon was a prime favorite with him.

Where the old supply trail dips abruptly down into the Chinikuk Valley, Lennon paused. Before him stood a neat white picket fence and beyond, in a little grass-plot, was a small white building, bravely proclaiming itself in black letters to be "Government School 21." He whistled sharply. There was no response. It had been the schoolmistress' unwritten law that she should meet men only at the gate.

The young man picked up a pebble and tossed it against the door. It opened immediately. A slender dark-haired girl in a shimmering blue dress stood in the doorway. Her piquantly pretty countenance mirrored a vast indignation.

"What barbarian methods of attracting attention!" she reproved frigidly. "Why in the world didn't you pull the letter cord as usual."

Lennon smiled unabashed. "Eccentricity and genius, you know," he explained. "I stopped merely to say good-by."

A startled light flamed momentarily in Alice Marion's eyes. "Good-by!" she exclaimed. "Surely you've not been ordered to——"

"Oh, no, I'm not ordered south," he continued hastily. "I won't be until—until they need a new schoolma'am at 21."

Miss Marion flushed rosily and tilted her delicate chin in fine disdain. "The absurdity of any such supposition!" she observed. "Really, if you don't eliminate the rustic-swain trend, I shan't stand here talking to you. Instead, just tell me where you are going."

"Up the Crazy Owl," responded the crest-fallen youth. "I'm rather curious about that haunted shack up there. Sort of feel that I owe it to Mac's folks, too, to try and clear up the situation. Mac and I went to tech school together."

The color had receded from the girl's face as she listened. A little frown of nervous perplexity appeared between her straight brows. "I—I know what you mean," she said faintly. "No doubt it's—it's the proper thing to do. In fact I've been just crazy to explore the old clearing myself. It's so lonely and strange and wonderful. But—you're not going alone?"

"Unless I'm being shadowed," he replied nonchalantly, "I believe that I am. It ought to be something of a lark with dry weather assured for a week or two. The ghosts, and all that, should turn to, and make it interesting for me."

The girl raised a round tanned arm and

consulted an absurdly tiny wrist watch. "Nine-fifteen," she announced hurriedly. "I'm awfully sorry I have to go. I—I promised to go canoeing with Jack Melville. It's really quite a dreadful bore having a vacation with no place to visit."

She extended her hand demurely, snatched it away indignantly when he held it beyond the time limit, and then sped down the trail. A hundred feet away she stopped and turned.

"Arnold—Mr. Lennon," she called after him, "please don't blunder around until you're—eaten by anything. You know you've promised to take me to the Red Cliff dance next week!"

"I can't very well dodge all the black flies," he replied. "Hence the question of being eaten is not to be lightly answered. Otherwise, I don't anticipate anything so thrilling."

The dark-eyed girl's last hesitant injunction to be careful kept a smile on his lips for many a long mile through the yielding muskeg of the abandoned trail.

Late that night his camp fire gleamed ruddily away up on the blunt shoulder of Little Dorokite. Below him, ghostly radiant in the moonlight, lay the valley of the Crazy Owl.

Al Parres rolled out early the morning after the light episode at Ghost Cabin. He debated mentally the question of returning at once to the shack. He didn't take the back trail, however. Instead, he resumed his slow progress northward along the banks of the Crazy Owl.

The sharp outcroppings of the faulted rock ledges, thrusting upward from thirty to fifty feet above the surrounding trees, continued to engage his attention.

One of them in particular, affording a view of the trail ahead for a quarter of a mile or more, seemed to fascinate him. He climbed up on it, and began a systematic search through the tangled branches of the dwarfed balsams. These were hardly four feet high, and their needles stung his face as he crawled slowly about on his hands and knees.

He worked his way systematically back and forth across the knoll. Groping through the damp muskeg his fingers finally encountered a chill cylindrical object. He pulled it forth with an eager ejaculation. It was the rust-pitted barrel and magazine of a repeating rifle.

With an exclamation of excitement he continued his search. Through the network of branches he caught a glimpse of some object gleaming ivory white against the gold-green background of moss. It was a human skull, half buried in the muskeg.

Parres examined it critically. Three teeth gleamed yellow against the rain-bleached jawbone. They were crowned with gold. The body apparently had been dragged about by wolverines. By degrees he assembled the fragments of bone, moldy cloth and aged leather that spelled out the story of the tragedy.

A little cluster of half-corroded shells told eloquently as words the desperate nature of that solitary "last stand." The rifle lay pointing north, and the relation of the skull and the gaudy beads freed by time from the rotting moosehide moccasins, suggested the same direction.

From the pocket of the moldy corduroy trousers he extricated some shapeless wads of paper, a carved leather tobacco pouch and a tarnished silver match case. This last he polished assiduously. It was black with oxidation, but gradually the native gray color gleamed through. Slowly he deciphered portions of the inscription. "To—Manning McRae—from—his——" The last word seemed "daughter," but he was content with what he had already learned.

"So it's McRae, all right," he said aloud, with infinite satisfaction in his tones. "That part of the affair is cleared up at last. And all the time those fools thought 'Lucky' Bob Lonergan's skeleton back in the shack was his!"

He sat in his snug covert for hours, smoking one cigarette after another, and talking with a sort of sardonic humor to the skull at his feet.

"You evidently came back here hoping to pot Lonergan, eh, old-timer?" he queried. "Guess you knew he was following you, all right, and just about what he had in mind. And Lucky, not being an infant in arms either, just naturally outguessed you! Detoured up on the ridge and shot down, instead of walking up the trail convenient-like."

Some other dawning thought erased the whimsical smile from his face. He stared with frowning brows over the gurgling rapids of the stream. "Lucky Bob got you," he

muttered slowly, as if puzzling out a problem, "but who in blazes got Lonergan?"

He rose, tossed the stub of his last smoke away and shrugged his shoulders. "With both of 'em croaked off," he soliloquized, preparing to clamber down the ledge, "it's a cinch that somewhere between here and Ghost Cabin there are four fat pokes of pale dust waiting second discovery stakes! I know because I saw them once myself!"

Dusk descended, and the fireflies shed their metallic light in intermittent sparks over the clearing. The moon had not yet risen, and Lennon found it no great feat to gain the interior of the shack undetected.

Groping among the musty hay and broken boards of the bunk he extricated a small, black, square box. From his pocket he took another, shrouding it as carefully in the same place of concealment. Then after other detailed operations requiring considerably more time, he began his stealthy withdrawal. Back on the bluff shoulder of Little Dorokite he built a camp fire that roared ruddily into the gloom.

After it was well started, he stole into the timber and doubled back on the trail. Prone behind a moss hummock he stared back at the fire. It glowed like a tiny red star in the distance, a very obvious beacon to any one ranging the lower valley. But though the moon rose finally and cast shadowy shapes across the path, he could discern no one approaching up the trail or along the old runway, both commanded by his strategic cover.

At dawn he resumed his inspection of the little black box. After an hour's manipulation of various pans and chemicals he held a dripping snapshot negative against the light. An expression of annoyance was succeeded by one of amusement. For the only object pictured in the door of Ghost Cabin was a young porcupine!

One of the silk threads stretched across the lower part of the door had set off the trigger flash. Over his breakfast he pondered the various aspects of the situation. The picture had served to take the edge off his enthusiasm. A clumsy porcupine heard whining and grunting in the darkness of a deserted camp by credulous chechahcos had doubtlessly started many a weird tale in the North Woods.

The origin of the story of queer happenings at Moosehead Cabin seemed almost as innocuous. The mere finding of the skeleton of a man there, augured no great mystery. Men were always succumbing to hunger or cold or disease on the lonesome trails. Neither was it conclusive evidence of foul play that this man should have been but a short time previous in good health.

Al Parres' tale of McRae's eighty thousand dollars in pale gold rested solely on the axis of his credibility. Even Jack the Moose with his terribly scarred arm added but little to the atmosphere of uncanniness.

An owl has been known to strike for a man under the mistaken impression that his fur cap was a rabbit or other small animal. The great bird's flight is noiseless as time itself, and a heavy thrust of its great talons would slice a man's flesh like butter. There was enough of Celtic blood in the huge half-breed to make him sensible to the dramatic value of maintaining an element of mystery about the occurrence.

Yet there always remained at least one definite fact that could not be so idly dismissed. Howard McNiven lying sprawled across the dusty floor, in his own blood, was certainly no fantasy of the imagination.

The strange slits in the khaki shirt and the blunt gashes in the throat and wrists were terribly real. Whatever had crept out of the rain-swept darkness that fatal night was neither a ghost nor a porcupine. That inevitable conclusion strengthened the young civil engineer's eagerness and determination.

Sunset found him again lurking in the forest fringe, his head screened with mosquito netting and his hands and wrists protected from the insect pests by leather gloves.

The lush wild hay grew to shoulder height at the rear of the cabin, and it was at this point that he chose to commence operations. He had almost reached the shack when the rustling of chips in the little clearing became distinctly audible. He paused, listening intently.

Then through the cracks in the wall he caught the lightning gleam of the ignited flash. Some one screamed shrilly. Lennon sprang to his feet and dashed around the corner. As he did so he collided violently with a figure approaching from the opposite direction. The impact threw them both to the ground, but the other regained his feet with catlike agility.

His superior speed conferred a decided advantage. Lennon strove to close with him, but the other's fist shot out swiftly, landing with a sickening jolt upon the pit of the

stomach. Before the young engineer could recover something crashed down upon his head. A red flare seemed to burn before his eyes, and then the events of the night erased themselves.

Dawn was creeping pallidly over the brawling rapids of the Crazy Owl when he regained consciousness. Blood had seeped down from his lacerated scalp, and the sodden mosquito netting was literally covered with mosquitoes and black flies. He ripped it off for relief and walked rather dizzily toward the Ghost Cabin.

The rim of the sun appeared above the treetops, and in its ruddy light every detail of the dusty interior was the same as it had appeared on the occasion of his first visit. Only the hanging ends of the broken silk thread, discernible against the door because the dew had beaded on them, bore testimony to the events of the previous evening.

Apparently no effort had been made to ascertain the hiding place of the camera and trigger-flash apparatus. He groped with trembling fingers in the débris of the old bunk and thrust the retrieved box into his coat pocket. His head ached savagely and he was weak with nausea.

Stumbling slowly up the mountain trail he tried to systematize his vague impressions of the evening's occurrences. Save for the flash, the sharp cry and the collision with the other night prowler, he had salvaged but few facts out of the wreckage of his defeat. One of them was the mysterious shriek. It was pitched in such a high key that it seemed the cry of a woman or a child. The thought that it might have been the screech of a startled maniac caused him to shudder involuntarily. He braced himself with a plunge in the icy mountain stream and started to brew some coffee.

Afterward, when he held the second negative up to the light he uttered an ejaculation of astonishment.

Depicted standing in the door of the cabin, with her back turned and a pistol leveled at some one outside, was a woman in a corduroy and buckskin trail costume. Over her right shoulder he could just discern a beaded gauntlet and the muzzle of her weapon. Beyond, and half obscured by the top of the doorway and the brim of her Stetson hat, was the countenance of a man.

Only the brows and eyes of the latter were visible, and these were too uncertainly defined to suggest any one he knew. The second flash had proved almost as futile as the first. He made a print of it but the picture afforded no better clew to the identity of the strange visitors to the cabin.

The woman apparently had been backing toward the cabin, either holding the man at bay or keeping her pistol leveled as a precaution against stealthy assault out of the gloom. It at least cleared up the mystery of the scream.

He studied the snapshot intently for almost an hour. The woman was slender and neatly garbed, with a beaded buckskin jacket, corduroy skirt and high boots. It was patent that she was not a squaw, and her presence in the Crazy Owl Valley seemed to Lennon almost as inexplicable as the death of his former chum.

The drowsy stillness of mid-afternoon brooded over the grass-grown space as the young engineer again approached the clearing. At the door the silence seemed so oppressive that he paused, drawing his automatic for instant utility. No foe lurked in the shadowy interior. Yet there was evidence of one having been there.

On one of the great palmated antlers of the mounted moose head a rude diagram had been chalked. It depicted the four points of the compass with an arrow pointing south. Immediately below it was drawn a crude skull and crossbones. And on the dusty table reposed the crumbling bones of a human hand. The index finger followed the direction of the arrow. The nature of the threat was obvious.

Lennon inspected the grim curio carefully. The lines in his face grew tense as he studied the moldy bones. "Clear out or croak, eh?" he muttered. He turned his attention to the rough diagram. As he walked over toward it something behind the broad antlers moved. It was the central figure in his first flash light, the young porcupine.

The moose head bore evidence of the animal's insatiable appetite. In fact the beast seemed to be demolishing the product of Lutefisk Larson's crude handiwork. Lennon brandished a stick and the salt-seeking vandal climbed down hurriedly and shuffled away into cover of the grass.

The engineer stared at the aged and dusty trophy with a new curiosity. Even in its distorted and decrepit condition it was a magnificent specimen. The antlers spread a good eighty inches between tips, and the

long head was supported by a neck of massive depth and thickness. Many a passer-by had been deterred from taking it only because of its great bulk and ponderous weight.

The porcupine's depredations were quite evident. It seemed to have been gnawing through the hide to obtain the salt with which Larson had cured the green pelt. The lonely homesteader had labored with infinite pains to supply the deficiencies of his situation. The neck-mold was ingeniously formed of tough-twisted willow withes veneered with a molding layer of river clay.

The salt that had been such a potent lure to the porcupines glistened in shining crystals as Lennon ripped away the dusty hide. Some of the willow boughs were gnawed through, revealing the moss-crammed interior of the great sagging neck. As he stared at the dark aperture a chipmunk darted out of its nest. Startled by the abruptness of its appearance Lennon lost his balance. Aged boards cracked under him and he clutched instinctively at the nearest antler. There was a sound of ripping hide and splintering wood as man and moose head tumbled to the floor together.

"Fresno Al" Parres, frequenter of the Crazy Owl wilderness, was disposed to be humorous. He knelt before a small fire dexterously flipping sour-dough pancakes. Beside him a smoke-blackened coffeepot bubbled angrily, and beyond were evidences of a meal prepared for two. One tin cup and plate gleamed on the muskeg, beside other utensils cleverly fashioned out of birch bark.

"Our facilities are limited," he remarked, "but my natural chivalry compels me to offer you the factory-made 'silverware.' For me, the old trail makeshifts will serve admirably."

His guest did not seem to enthuse over his "chivalry." She was a very young and very pretty girl, albeit somewhat disheveled. Sitting close to the trunk of a small spruce tree, she glared at him with angry eyes. Her cheeks were flushed and her demeanor spelled indignation rather than fear.

About her slim waist were wound several buckskin thongs which bound her securely to the spruce trunk. These were knotted on the far side in order to insure greater security, and every movement of the girl's arms brought a sharp glance from her captor. Parres seemed unmoved by the young lady's manifest hostility.

He filled the tin plate with golden-brown flapjacks, lavished maple sirup upon them, and passed it to the girl. "Education," he remarked loftily, "has certain advantages even in the timber. Thus, during my absence, you may meditate upon many profound topics foreign to the untutored mind."

"Where are you going?" asked the girl.

The gambler smiled. "Since you won't tell me your secrets," he said, "I can't tell you mine. Now, if you'd only explain why you were roaming around Ghost Cabin all alone, and why I found you groping about in the dark, and who the other——"

The color faded from the girl's rosy cheeks. "You—you don't mean that you'll leave me—tied up like this, do you?" she faltered.

Parres regarded her gravely. "That is my intention," he responded.

He smiled amiably and proffered the tin cup filled with black coffee.

"If your purposes are lawful," said the girl slowly, "there is not a single reason why you should be afraid of—my party."

"Perhaps not," he assented suavely. "Only you didn't seem disposed to assume that they were perfectly lawful. That infernal burst of fireworks revealed you covering me with a pistol. The next instant the grass had erupted one of your confederates. He tackled me like a wild cat. My reasons for being here——"

"What are they?" snapped the girl sharply.

"Are such," he continued, ignoring the interruption, "that I must speed up my work."

The wide blue eyes beneath the level brows fairly crackled with angry light. "And such," she mimicked, "that you are criminally liable for——"

"Abduction," concluded Parres brightly. "Singular how my early legal training lingers, isn't it?"

He began his leisurely preparations for departure. The crumpled little figure beneath the spruce tree seemed utterly forgotten. Parres tucked several wax candles into his pocket, and unearthed from its covert of willow bushes a slender steel crowbar. From one shoulder hung an empty canvas sack; on the other was slung his rifle. Under pretense of examining his pistol he glanced furtively at the girl.

The plate in her lap was almost untouched.

"Not hungry?" he queried casually.

"I—I was just thinking," said the girl. "If a grizzly or something should come along while you were away, it would be awfully —awkward."

Parres frowned in perplexity. "There is that possibility," he admitted.

"And it is going to rain," added the girl eagerly.

He glanced upward. Thick blue-black clouds were crowding up out of the western horizon. Now and then a red streak would zigzag across the sky, to be succeeded by the dull rumble of distant thunder.

"If I were to release you," he said slowly, "would you promise not to notify any member of your party for at least twelve hours? If my last play pans out right, it won't make any difference after that."

"I promise," said the girl.

"Honor bright?"

"Honor bright!"

Parres knelt and severed the bonds. The girl rose slowly, smoothing out her wrinkled corduroy skirt.

For a long moment they stared into each other's eyes.

"I believe," said the girl suddenly, in a curiously impersonal tone, "that you are still a—sort of a ghost of a gentleman!"

The proprietor of Chinikuk's most notorious dance hall and faro hell bowed acknowledgment. "I should like to believe that you are not mistaken," he said. "I am leaving my large pack here. It contains considerable provisions and some documents you may find rather interesting. We may not meet again. So—good-by!"

She watched him out of sight. As he disappeared around a bend in the trail she was suddenly aware that there were tears in her eyes. She wanted to cry over the whole wretched mess. But before mustering the requisite enthusiasm she noted that a blue-steel object glinted on the yielding muskeg. It was Parres' last and most genuine courtesy.

He had returned her pistol.

The man who was "a ghost of a gentleman" stopped in the friendly cover of the last barrier of tangled spruce and glanced about the clearing. In the dim twilight the cabin was a mere black smudge against the toneless background of undulating grass. Brief puffs of wind agitated the treetops. The sky was a luminous purple, riven at intervals with flashes of forked lightning. One of Crazy Owl's famous electrical storms was imminent.

Nervously impatient to have his work over with, he refrained from a lengthy scrutiny of the clearing. Striding briskly through the open space he paused in the doorway. From within came the now familiar grunting and scuffing sounds. The white circle of light from his electric lamp revealed three porcupines demolishing the fragments of the fallen moose head.

"You've sure finished it," he muttered aloud. The frightened animals scuffled across the threshold, and he thrust the door closed. Having lighted two of the candles he thrust the old cedar bolt of the door, and prepared for operations.

The first step was a critical inspection of the walls and floor. Then he removed his rifle and automatic and placed them on the table beside his discarded coat. The searching rays of his flash light sought out the dimmer corners of the room. He knelt beside the half-eaten antlers, staring down at the wrecked head. The mangy hide of the huge neck revealed two or three long clean slits such as might have been made only by a knife.

There was a scratching sound at the door, succeeded by a queer muffled whine. Parres stood up, instantly alert. The sounds ceased. Rain began to patter overhead, the intervals of silence gradually losing themselves in the sustained roar of the heavy downpour. Lightning crackled along the spruce tops, causing the man to wince involuntarily. The flash was succeeded by a deafening burst of thunder.

A moment later, through the broken diamond-pane window, the seeker for admittance leaped lightly into the room. It was a huge, copper-red dog, with the pointed ears and lean muzzle that bespoke the true wolf strain. The animal was taller and heavier of shoulder than any wolf that had ever howled in the Crazy Owl swamps, and its curled tail and broad chest suggested forbears of Newfoundland blood.

The interloper stood there a moment, with one forefoot curled up from the ground. Parres stared at it, the color receding from his face. He had seen the great brute before. On the last occasion it was straining in the lead traces of McRae's gold-laden team, hurling its hundred and sixty pounds into the collar in a desperate endeavor to

keep ahead of Lucky Bob Lonergan's pursuing malemutes.

In the moment when Parres' mind sped back over the ensuing years, the bronzed husky's head sank lower and straightened out until the lean muzzle maintained one line with the bristling neck. The uplifted paw stiffened to the floor and the legs took on the peculiar mincing rigidity that heralds the wolf dog's attack. Parres' eyes roved from the menacing brute to his weapons on the table. In light of McNiven's experience the discarding of them seemed a peculiarly foolhardy idea.

The dog advanced a step, a low choked rumbling sound rising in its throat. The man's hand crept slowly back toward the bunk. It closed on the cold shaft of the crowbar. He shifted his position slightly. Parres thought he knew thoroughly the tactics of the great tongueless dog which McRae had found dazed and bleeding in the Chilkat Trail after "Wolf" Lanyeaux had beaten it insensible and mutilated its mouth in a frenzy of rage.

The old Scotchman fed it soup for two months and nursed it back to health. It had been only a pup when it made its ferocious attack on Lanyeaux. When it attained full size its devotion to McRae and fearless hostility to other men had become a tradition in the Tanana hills. While he waited the attack Parres' mind roamed back irrelevantly to his last talk with Lonergan.

"I'll croak the damned malemute first," Lonergan had said. "I'm more afraid of him than McRae. Afterward, the dust will be easy!" Parres smiled grimly at the thought. At the time he had wished Lonergan luck! The vision of the skeleton lying in the silent gloom of the lonely cabin rose between him and the stealthy advance of the dog. He was startled out of the brief reverie. Under one of the big red paws a board creaked sharply. He paused tensely with the crowbar uplifted to strike.

It described a glittering arc in the candlelight as he strove to crush the old leader's skull. But the red one came in under the blow and his white tusks sheared the muscles of the man's arm from wrist to elbow. The impact carried them both over and they fell in a heap beside the bunk. The lean wolf muzzle drove in for the throat, but Parres fended instinctively with his left hand. He felt the bones crack in the animal's jaws as he hurled it off.

They had fallen near an old three-legged birch camp stool. As he struggled to his feet the man grasped it desperately and the combatants faced each other again. The roar of the rain beat in upon Parres' ringing ears and drowned the unnerving rumble in the animal's throat. The latter danced stiff-legged before him, seeking like an expert boxer, for the fatal opening. Its teeth glistened in the mellow light and its lips writhed back red and lean in the familiar wolf smile of fighting rage.

Beneath Parres' feet an aged board snapped and the very sound seemed to break the tension. The red dog leaped in again and Parres brought the camp stool down with desperate force. The white teeth clicked in a clean miss as the malemute's body shot by. But the red one landed with feet bunched and was pivoting almost before he touched the floor. The second lunge was not as deftly parried. The hot breath of the bronze killer flamed in Parres' face as its teeth slit from temple to chin.

The stool had struck him just back of the shoulders and the old veteran faltered, obviously dazed by the blow on the spine. In the moment's respite Parres sprang past him and seized his pistol. His right arm, twice slashed, hung helpless but he grasped the weapon desperately with his injured left hand. The red leader was approaching again, his lean muzzle low and outthrust, his bronzed ruff standing in a great quivering collar, his oblique green eyes aflame.

The heavy automatic spat forth red sparks as the dog gathered himself for the leap. It roared again, deafeningly, as the great bronze body was in mid-air. But the mute malemute never faltered. The thrust of his attack hurled the man over backward. The lean muzzle drove in determinedly for the unguarded jugular, and this time the man did not rise.

The victor stood for a moment over the vanquished, then walked slowly across the room. The resiliency had gone out of his stride and great purple splotches were spreading on the shimmering coppery coat. He sprang into the old bunk and lay down on the musty hay. The lean muzzle dropped wearily on the great forepaws and the angry glow died out of the green eyes.

The malemute was on guard again. He was maintaining the long vigil that had commenced five years before when "Boston" McRae stationed him there with an injunc-

tion to "Watch it!" and departed on the mission from which he had not returned.

Slowly the bronze head sank lower. The oblique eyes began to glaze. A convulsive shudder set the gleaming hair to quivering in the mellow light. The tongueless leader's labored breathing ceased. It was very quiet in the old cabin, save for the rain and forest murmurs. The silent malemute had vindicated his trust.

Up in the snug shelter of a lean-to on Dorokite, Lennon awoke with a start. The first faint fingers of the dawn were already stealing up out of the eastern horizon. The rain had ceased save when a gust of wind in the spruce branches sent a transient shower down upon the tarpaulin.

He stared at his watch with guilty trepidation. The hands pointed to twelve minutes after five. Lulled by the roar of the winds and exhausted by the strange labor of the previous afternoon he had overslept almost twelve hours. It had been his intention to renew the watch at Ghost Cabin, but his failure to do so seemed to occasion him little concern.

He ate a cold breakfast and then began the task of packing his meager camping equipment. At frequent intervals he would pause to stare reflectively across the purple spaces of the valley at his feet, now flushed with the crimson splendor of a cloudless morning.

"Probably the last time I'll see a sunrise in the sticks," he muttered aloud. "At any rate, I've found out why ghosts walk in the Crazy Owl!"

The interned captive consulted her tiny wrist watch for the twentieth time. The rain had ceased and the night shadows with their hosts of imagined terrors were retreating before the rosy onslaught of the rising sun. The twelve-hour period had elapsed. The girl had rummaged the old pack sack, but the "documents" Parres mentioned were not very illuminating. A series of maps of the Crazy Owl were freely annotated with crosses and triangles. The last one shed some light on their nature.

This had a brief memorandum. "Elimination of possible hiding places of cache leaves sunken pork cask somewhere near Larson's place last best bet." She pondered this hypothesis the next morning as she knocked bravely at the closed door of the cabin. There was no response. The rain-swollen door refused to yield.

Sitting down wearily on an old chopping block, she puzzled with knitted brows upon the best step to take. Her mission, as she ruefully admitted to herself, had been foolishly conceived, and was an utter failure. There remained to be considered only the queer forlorn little camp she had pitched a mile or two south of the clearing. She was sick of the futile silk dog tent and other absurd equipment secretly assembled for her long-projected quest. The cheery quiet of the clearing almost lulled her to sleep. Then she bethought herself of the broken window. She had at least earned the right to that last weary inspection of the cabin.

Rounding the corner of the shack, she stopped with a startled gasp. A man, his back turned toward her, was peering in through the opening. The girl fumbled for her pistol.

"Hands up!" she commanded sternly.

The one addressed sprang back and turned, elevating his hands as he did so. His face was very white and his eyes burned strangely.

"Alice!" he cried in astonishment. "Alice Marion! What on earth ——"

The automatic pistol was shoved back into its holster. The schoolmistress of Walking Turtle strove very desperately to look unconcerned. Something in her crimson countenance made the bluff a failure.

"Alice Marion—McRae," she corrected very formally. "That's my full name. Dad wrote—a few months before his death—that he had 'struck it rich.' I've always thought that somewhere in Crazy Owl I might find his lost cache. I was afraid to trust any one—but you—with the secret. It's just terrible up here alone. I couldn't bear to tell you because you laugh so much at all my ideas and——"

Despite the sophistication of the buckskin jacket and corduroy skirt, the daughter of Boston McRae was unmistakably crying. Arnold Lennon moved over closer.

"Are you sure," he insisted, "that is the only reason you came up here all by yourself?"

The girl evaded his eyes. "Why, certainly," she declared, her countenance mirroring vast astonishment, "what on earth could——"

"And you didn't come to save *me* from being eaten by anything?"

Miss McRae didn't answer at once. After a while, she whispered in his ear in a very tiny voice that *maybe* there had been other reasons. The explanation seemed very satisfactory to the government's transportation expert. He led her gently away down the back trail.

"We'll take the next boat out," he was saying enthusiastically. "And with the interest on *your* money, loaned to me, we'll buy a ranch in California."

"My money?" ejaculated the girl.

"Yes," said Lennon. "I found your father's lost cache. He had hidden the gold in Lutefisk Larson's mounted moose head. The nuggets are pale because they're almost half platinum. Present quotations on both metals make it worth about twice what he estimated."

They paused at the first bend in the trail to stare back at Ghost Cabin. The morning sunlight gleamed upon the brown logs and tattered tar paper, and a family of chipmunks held high carnival on the roof.

Despoiled of its mantle of mystery, the old clearing looked singularly serene and commonplace. The mute sentinel had concluded his long vigil, and, strangely enough, with his guarded treasure in its rightful ownership.

THE OLD AND NEW IN MEDICAL PRACTICE

WHEN the epidemic of Spanish influenza in different parts of the United States began, physicians were in a better position to meet it than those who treated victims of epidemics in the past. The newest discoveries as to the specific functions of some of the organs of the human body, the increasing knowledge regarding the germs causing many diseases, improved sanitary conditions and radical changes in the administration of powerful drugs, helped to arm our physicians in combating the disease. While it is true that the influenza spread more widely and resulted in more deaths than had been expected at the first, there is no doubt that it would have been more deadly as late as fifty years ago. Then several diseases of the thorax, lungs, and bronchial tubes were sometimes classified as one disease, the vermiform appendix had not been discovered, appendicitis, peritonitis, and some other diseases of the abdominal region were all generally known in most cases as "inflammation of the bowels," and the question of sanitation was not considered as important in the treatment of patients as it is now. On the kill-or-cure principle of the past drastic doses of powerful drugs were given and when such drugs as calomel were prescribed they were administered in quantities at least three times as large as any physician would dare to administer now.

When we go farther back in the history of medical practice we find that bleeding was the usual panacea for human ailments. If a lady fainted the lancet instead of smelling salts was used. Leeches were applied on the slightest indication of swelling, discoloration or sores on body or limbs and were so frequently called into use, that occasionally families kept their own leeches.

Much earlier we find that ingredients were used in some of the medical prescriptions the use of which we would look on as inconceivable at the present day. There are in existence old medical books, probably preserved as curiosities, in which mention is made of powdered mummy and substances even more objectionable being used in prescriptions.

The physicians of the present day, however, know better what they are doing than the physicians of the past. They know the why and the wherefore of nearly every disease they are called upon to treat and their knowledge is still increasing. The study of medicine and the treatment of diseases are fast reaching the stage when they will be an exact science.

A Chat With You

NOW that the war is over it is time to stop fighting. Unless we want to set back the hands of the clock to 1914, we must determine to make this new world which is arising from the ashes of the old, a better place to live in. Whether or not you fought in the army, you have now a duty, equally important. It is to maintain and pass along to the people about you the spirit of fair play, of broad-minded toleration, of humanity and charity. It was for these things that the war was fought. It is your duty to see that they flourish. You are young—in spirit at least. Whatever you are—business man, engineer, lawyer or doctor, you have your place in the great organization of life. It is your privilege to take part in the greatest period of human advance we have ever known.

THERE are groups of men in this country who would like to see the whole fabric of our society shattered to bits. All the Bolsheviki are not in Russia. There are, perhaps, employers of labor who have not learned the lessons of the last four years. There is a philosophy of hatred held by those who recognize only the most elementary type of labor as useful and who would seize everything for the benefit of the manual laborer. The worst thing we could have here would be the rise of a spirit of class feeling. In the past we have been gloriously free from it. We have been socially and industrially as near a democracy as has ever existed on any large scale. We all belonged to one great class—American citizens. We must maintain and strengthen that spirit. We must remember that any work—whether it is breaking rock or acting in a moving-picture show—that contributes to the happiness or comfort of mankind, is equally honorable. It is nonsense to imagine that the only man who works hard is the man who works with his hands. Our civilization was created by the brains of a comparative few, working through the hands of many. It is equally foolish to consider the manual worker as being made of different clay. In all essential things of manhood and humanity, the fireman in the engine cab and the millionaire in the special car are brothers. Whatever changes in law may seem necessary to meet new conditions, we must remember that the square deal, toleration and sympathy are the really essential things.

WE think that as time goes by, the arts—literature especially—will come to mean more and more to humanity. We can imagine—and with a good basis for our imagining—a world much easier to live in than the world we know to-day. When we consider how dreadful a creature the ancient man-ape was, and how great the progress has been since he fought and feared in a world of horrible violence, we have grounds for the highest hopes. Some day science will reach out and harness the tides, will reach up and set the limitless energy of the sun to work in the service of mankind. The struggle for existence will pass. People will fear starvation in that day no more than we fear wild beasts to-day. Greed and avarice, the legacy of a grimmer time, will die out. There will be contention, ambition, hope and struggle, but on a higher, sunnier field. The human mind will be set free and find a hundred new sympathies and activities. Every one will have the urge to work, not from the fear of hunger, but from the desire of

self-expression. Humor, gayety, charm as well as sympathy and charity will be in the air of that new world. Fiction as one of the greatest mediums through which men can understand each other will come into its own in the scheme of service. We shall know then that every writer who had a tale to tell and told it—from the humblest spinner of yarns up to Shakespeare himself—was moved by a profound instinct and played a useful part in the scheme of things.

WE hope that all of this does not sound highbrow and far-fetched. We try hard to say things simply and in straightforward fashion. We want to emphasize a little the part that fiction plays in building up a knowledge and sympathy with life. Some stories do this better than others. Some personalities are richer in humanity, more sensitive to things, more gifted in expression. We want especially to call your attention to a new four-part story by Caroline Lockhart which starts in the next issue. We have called it "The Wolf Pack," but we are by no means satisfied with the title. It is a tale of the West, of the sheep industry and of a girl's fight against difficulties, and finally her rise to fortune. It seems strange that THE POPULAR should run a story in which a girl is the central figure—but there are plenty of men in it. It is the story of a whole town as well as of the girl, and it has all the excitement and thrill that any one could wish. The next number opens with a splendid novel "Lights Out" by L. H. Robbins. There is a story of the navy by Ralph Paine, a detective story by H. C. Rowland, a secret-service story by Frederick Irving Anderson—and a lot of other good things.

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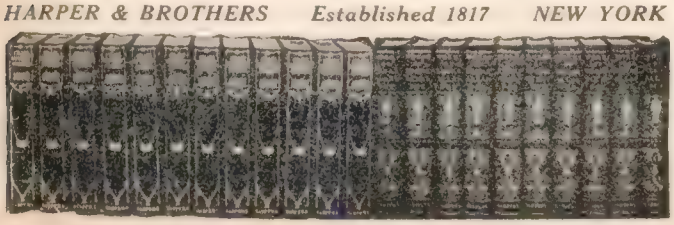

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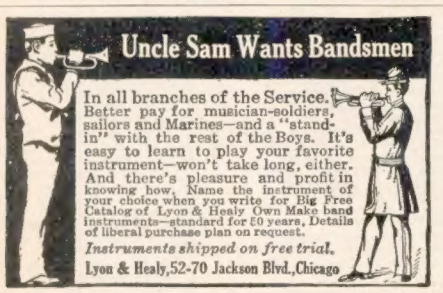
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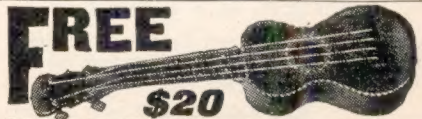

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